A FLY FISHERMAN'S VIVIAN HOWARD MAKE THE PERFECT THANKSGIVING PIE NEEDS A HOBBY DREAM VACATION RDEN SOUL of the SOUTH OCT. / NOV. 2022 SAVING MEET TEN TRAILBLAZERS PROTECTING THE EVERGLADES, POLLINATORS, FOODWAYS, SOUTH GAME FISH, SHOREBIRDS, AND MORE p. 115

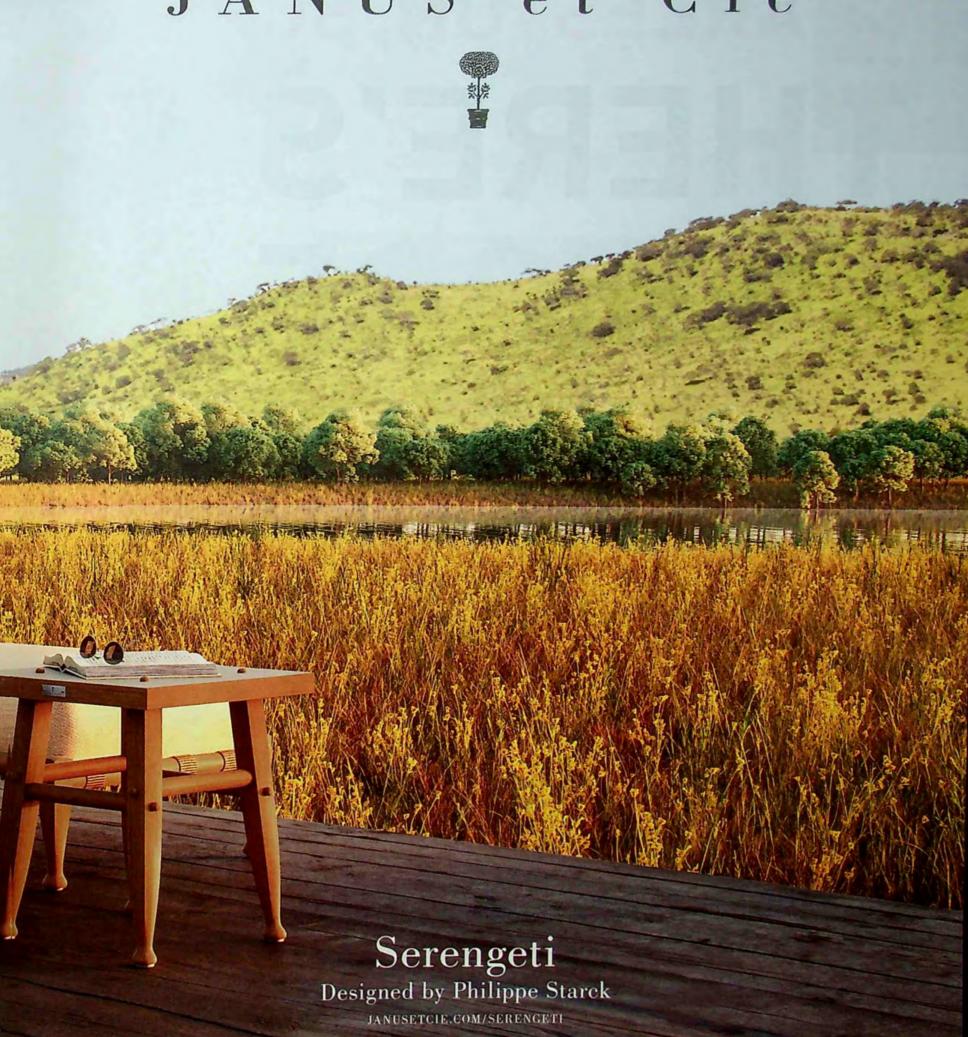
INCOMING A pair of roseate spoonbills prepare for landing near Beaufort, South Carolina.







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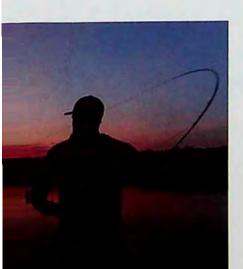








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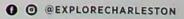


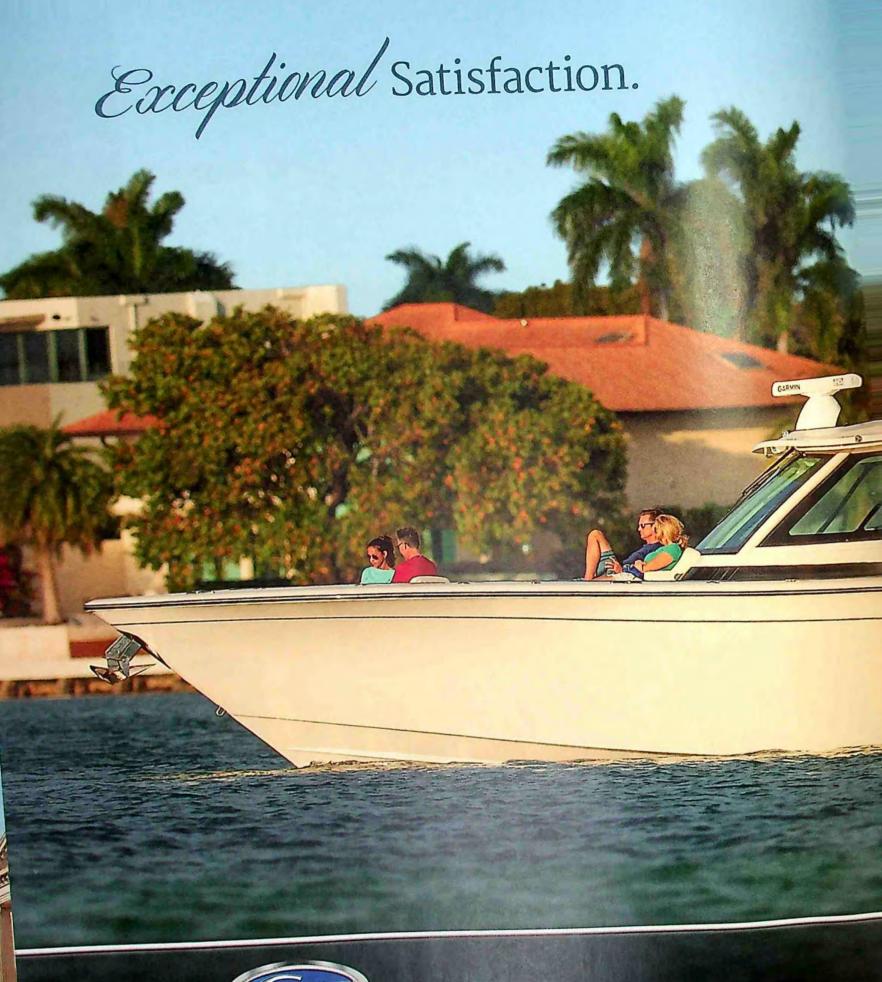
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Vol.XVI/No.5

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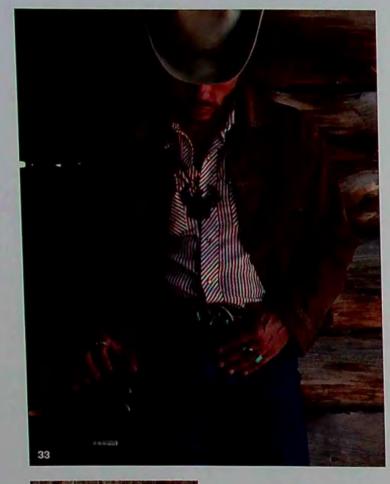
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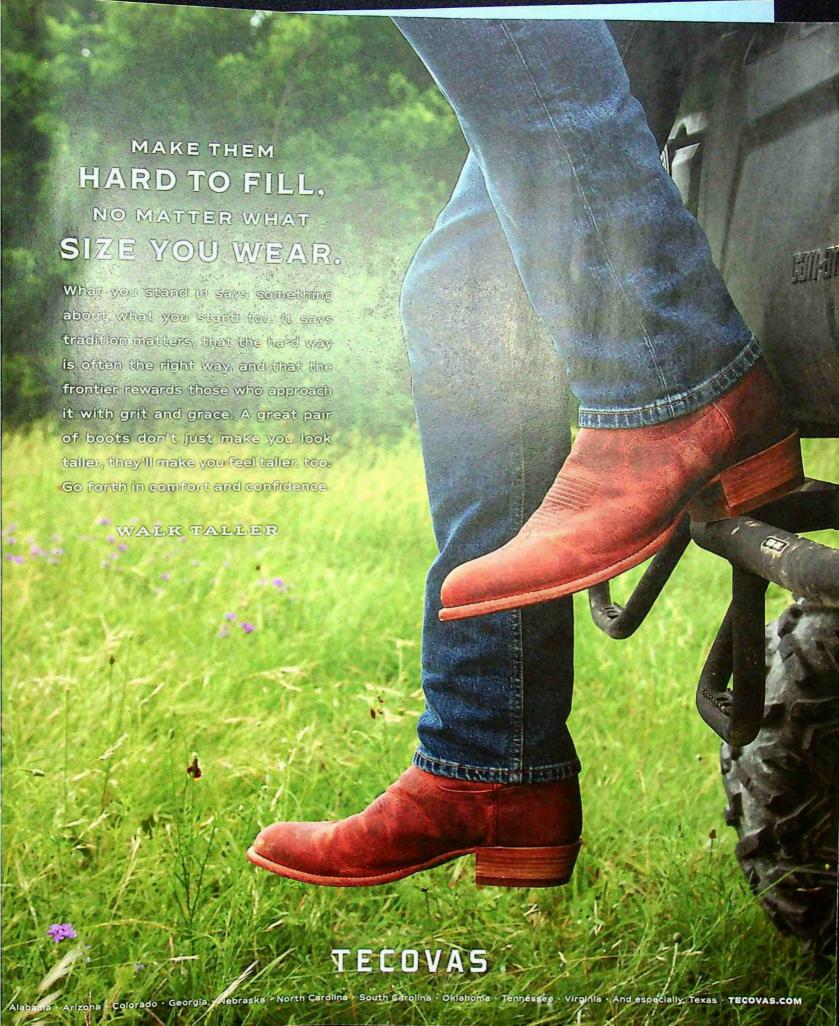
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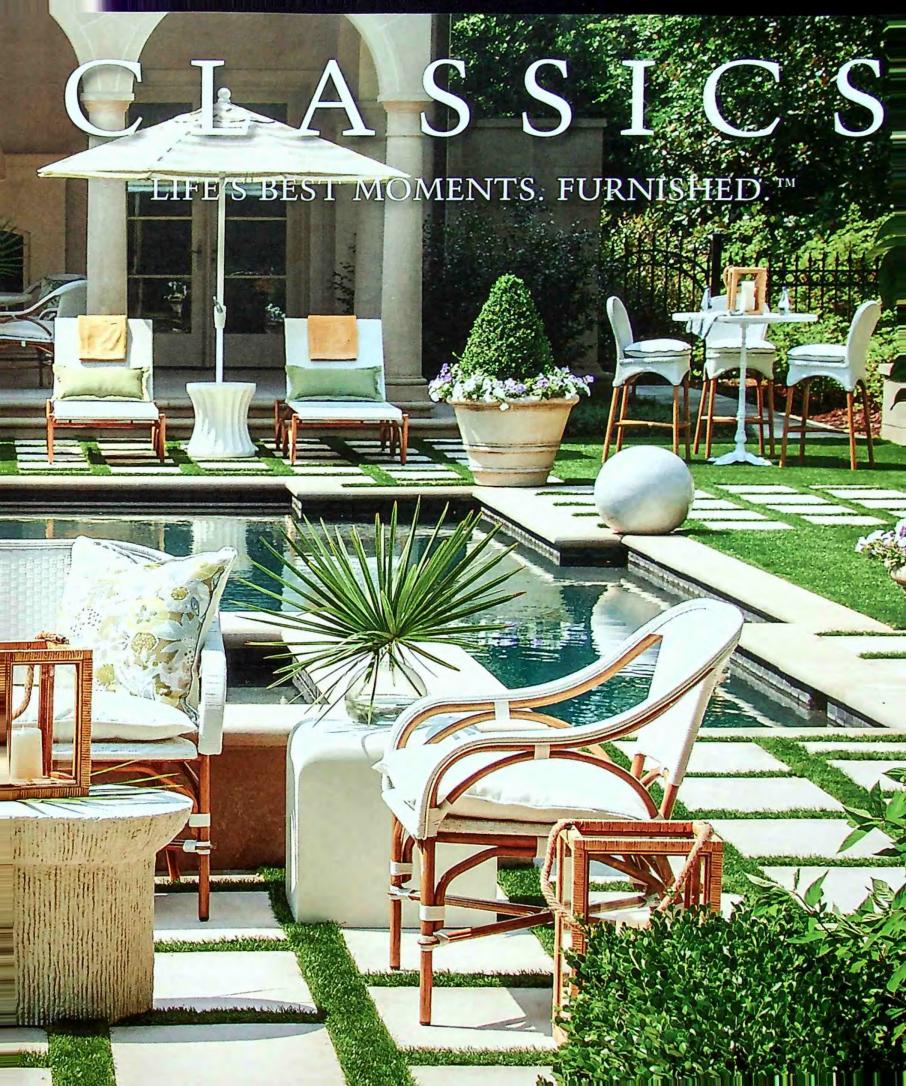
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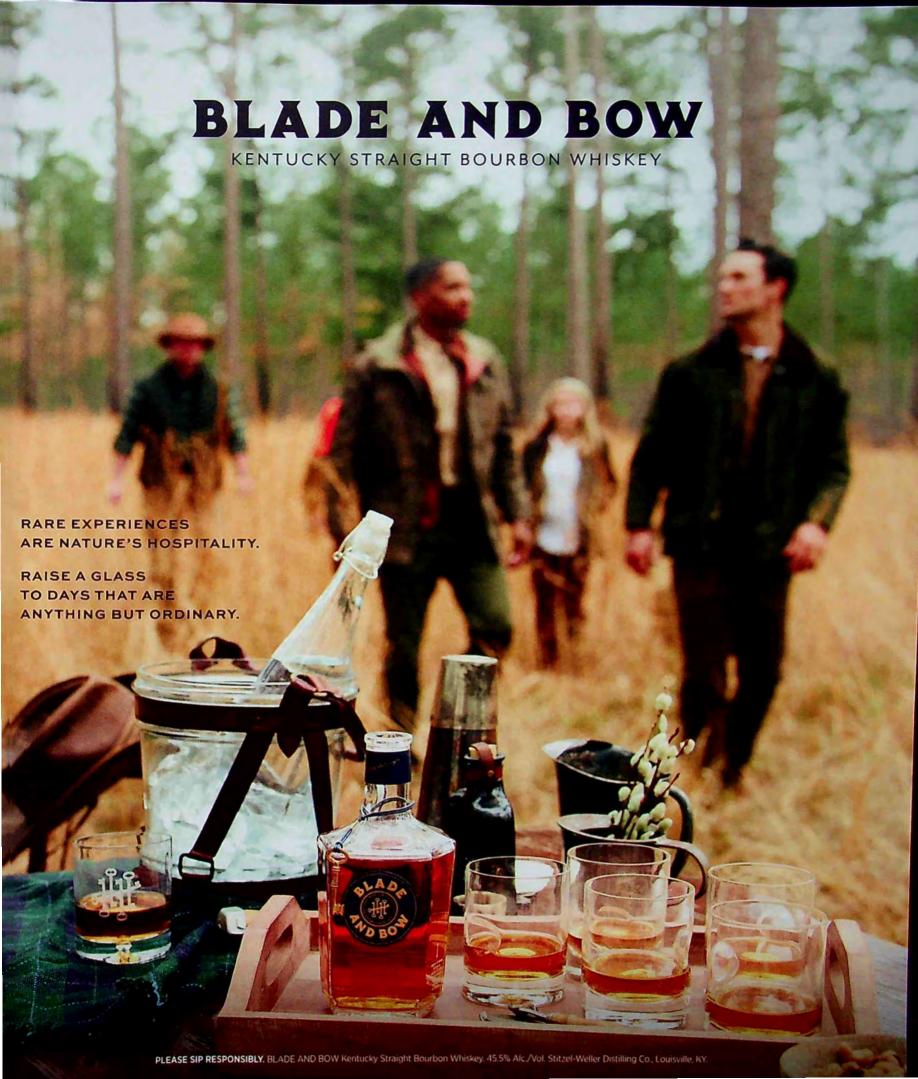
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Making a Wild Difference

CELEBRATING THE FOLKS ON THE FRONT LINES OF CONSERVATION

f you read this page regularly, follow me on Instagram, or know me, it will come as no surprise that I'm an outdoorsman and a staunch defender of the wild South. I detest game hogs (those who need to fill every limit for proof of success). I hate single-use plastic water bottles with a fury that some folks hold for SEC rivals. If you spend as much time as I do on our coastal waterways, there's no denying we're choking the ocean with plastic. (Quick pitch: Buy a reusable water bottle-Yeti or Healthy Human or whatever-and use it. It's easy, I promise.) Though I haven't completely ditched the lawn (yet), you won't find me fertilizing my grass, but rather adding rich compost to my garden box or pollinator pocket. And nothing delights me more than watching this ethos unspool in my children, Sam, who's nine, and Rose, six.

They ramble freely through the marsh. They know a fiddler crab is great bait for sheepshead and that a mudminnow will fool a sea trout. Occasionally a foot gets nicked by an oyster. They follow me into the wood duck swamp in the spooky inkiness of predawn. They raise money for the local sea turtle hospital. They pick up litter without being asked. They know that we eat what we catch or shoot, and never take more than we can eat. I believe that if I'm doing my job right, they should feel not only a connection to the natural world

Wes Carter (left) and DiBenedetto on the water in Charleston Harbor.

but also a responsibility to act as stewards.

Wes Carter cares deeply about stewardship. Carter, who is forty-three and grew up in North Carolina, is the third-generation president of Atlantic Packaging, the largest privately owned industrial packaging company in North America, which supplies materials for everything from food to furniture. In other words, not the typical résumé of someone on the forefront of the conservation wars. But Carter, a lifelong outdoorsman, has turned Atlantic and its offshoot, A New Earth Project, into leaders in sustainable packaging initiatives, working with companies and suppliers to reduce plastic and implement industry-level change, from developing sustainable beverage carriers to rethinking the way surfing companies ship boards. "The price of economic progress has, in many ways, been at the expense of wild places," he says. "We are now waking up to an undeniable fact. That model is radically unsustainable."

We were happy to partner with Atlantic Packaging for our "Champions of Conservation" feature (p.115). Carter and a panel of outstanding conservationists-Longleaf Alliance president Carol Denhof; Dale Threatt-Taylor, the executive director of the Nature Conservancy in South Carolina; Georgia hunter and bird-dog trainer Durrell Smith, cofounder of the Minority Outdoor Alliance; and Simon Perkins, the president of Orvis-joined our editorial team as we discussed the needs and work being done in a variety of conservation arenas around the South. Their input was instrumental in helping us choose the ten champions spotlighted in this issue. Whether providing shorebird nesting habitat, revealing the alarming presence of pharmaceuticals in fish, or preserving Indigenous knowledge and nomenclature, each of these passionate heroes has a different focus, but all are moving the needle when it comes to conservation, and showing us the way to a more sustainable future.

"Hearing about all of these amazing folks and their work gives me hope and further inspires me to do more," Carter says. "Nature and wild places are what nurture us as humans. This is where we return to our essence, find our joy, and teach our children about the wonder of life."

I couldn't agree more.

DAVID DIBENEDETTO

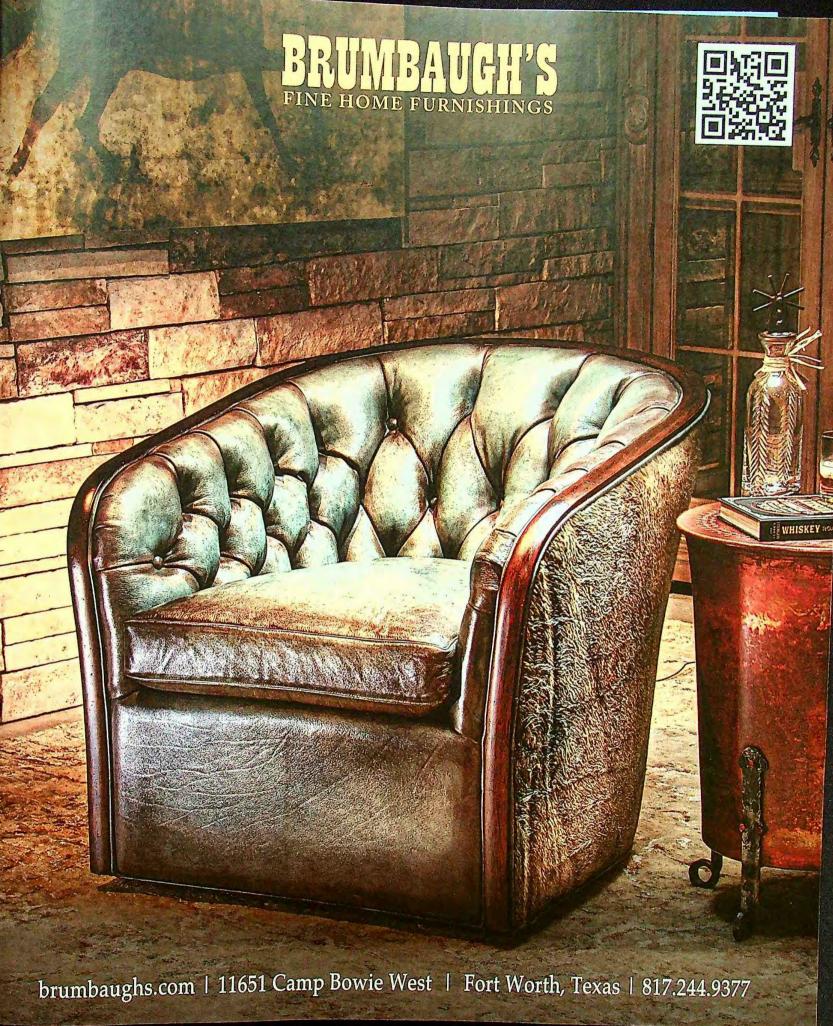
Senior Vice President & Editor in Chief



Everyday Edge

The perfect pocketknife?

If you've lived around Southerners for any amount of time, you've probably heard this one: You find yourself in a situation where you need a blade to, say, cut a rope or slice a smoked sausage on the tailgate, so you ask, "Anyone here have a knife?" And inevitably a weathered guy or gal says with a chuckle, "I have my pants on, don't I?" I'm forever on the hunt for the perfect pocketknife, and I was thrilled when I recently picked up Benchmade's Mini Osborne. Ascaled-down version of the twenty-year-old classic, the Mini delivers the brawn when needed but, at under four inches closed, tucks unobtrusively in my pocket. The fit and finish are impeccable, and the reverse tanto blade is hairsplitting sharp, just the thing for when somebody asks for a knife.







Frederick Stivers

ILLUSTRATOR

An avid hunter and fisherman, Frederick Stivers has spent time in the American West, the bayous around New Orleans, and the waters of South Florida, drawing inspiration from the flora, fauna, and outdoorspeople he's encountered. In his artwork, tarpon, bobwhites, and gundogs seemingly come alive in graphite, gouache, and watercolor. For "The Ducks of Home" (p. 140), the Missouribased artist sketched early-morning scenes from a blind on shotshell boxes. "When I'm working with these old boxes, I realize the wear and tear on them," he says. "Like the folks I hunt with, their imperfections are endearing."

"Like the folks I hunt with, their imperfections are endearing"

-Frederick Stivers on the shotshell boxes he used as canvases for "The Ducks of Home" (p. 140)



Kevin Wilson

WRITER

"The longer you spend in a place, the more it expands," says Kevin Wilson, a professor at Sewanee and the author of novels including The Family Fang and Nothing to See Here. For "Tennessee Time Warp" (p. 153), Wilson explored part of the Cumberland Plateau, near where he grew up and now lives with his wife and sons. "I got to focus on the present moment with a reporter's eye," he says-something that was new for him. "I don't write much nonfiction because luse all the things I would use in nonfiction in my fiction" His new novel. Now Is Not the Time to Panio, follows two artistic teenagers in Tennessee and comes out in November.



Lindsey Liles

WRITER

Since joining Garden & Gun's staff in 2020, Lindsey Liles has written about Black Warrior waterdogs, bats, whimbrels, bog turtles, and a newly discovered salamander in North Carolina. "But I have a running list of about a hundred other species I want to cover," says the Little Rock native. Liles fell in love with biology during her undergraduate years at Sewanee, and she came to further appreciate the planet's wonders when she taught English in the Galápagos Islands and lived for a year in Brazil. This issue, she contributed to and coedited "Champions of Conservation" (p.115) and wrote about Florida manatees (p. 38).



Justen Williams

PHOTOGRAPHER

Justen Williams was a music producer in New Orleans when he bought his first camera to record artists in his studio, "Taking all those pieces to make a whole song-it's the same with photography," he says. "Both can be used to tell a story." Since becoming a full-time photographer in 2018, Williams has worked on projects for Spotify and the Wall Street Journal and has captured such Louisiana luminaries as Trombone Shorty and the Dirty Dozen Brass Band. He adds to that list with portraits of Gail LeBoeuf and Hannah Chalew, two of the environmental visionaries spotlighted in "Champions of Conservation" (p.115).



Jennifer Kornegay

WRITER

Jennifer Kornegay has written about custom banjos and learned how to simmer crawfish stock while on assignment for G&G. The Mississippi native, who lives in Montgomery, Alabama, says there's nothing she loves more than a Southern maker or an inspiring food story. For "Playing Favorites" (p. 84), she visited the interiors store Still Johnson in Birmingham, and then explored outside the city, "Small-town Alabama has so much to offer," she says; in Greensboro, she chatted with Sarah Cole of Abadir's bakery (p. 58). "She is all about feeding her community and feeding them well, and I can personally vouch for her toasted tahini cookies."



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Stephanie Eley PHOTOGRAPHER

"Portraits are my heartbeat," Stephanie Eley says. "My goal is always to illuminate the righteousness within every person I meet-misfits of society, people of importance, and those who do not obtain enough recognition for what they do or what they have endured." The Atlanta photographer has captured images of actors, musicians, and everyday people for the New York Times and Atlanta magazine, and for this issue, she traveled to Macon, Georgia, to photograph the painter Cedric Smith in his backyard studio for "American Canvas" (p. 40). Eley recently returned from a two-month residency in Iceland and is preparing a new body of work focusing on cultural diversity in a highly homogeneous country.

"My goal is always to illuminate the righteousness within every person"

-Stephanie Eley, who photographed the Macon, Georgia, artist Cedric Smith (p. 40)



John Burgoyne ILLUSTRATOR

John Burgoyne illustrated his first "What's in Season" article (p. 60) for G&G in 2010, and has since drawn such Southern staples as trout, tomatoes, and okra, as well as novelties like mesquite beans and walking onions. For each artwork, he uses pen and ink followed by watercolors. A graduate of the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Burgoyne has also painted maps for National Geographic, decades of back covers for Cook's Illustrated, and, last year, a stamp series of otters for the U.S. Postal Service. "My style lends itself to things like antique maps and botanicals," he says. "Realistic but with a nod to old engravings."



CJ Hauser WRITER

In 2019, CJ Hauser, who teaches at Colgate University in New York, wove the true story of her broken-off engagement and a trip to the Texas Gulf to research whooping cranes into what became a viral essay for the Paris Review titled "The Crane Wife." This summer, she released a memoir-in-essays of the same name that delves into similar questions of identity and love. "It's out, and everything I could have possibly written or been asked to write is done," she says with a laugh. But for "Writers" Roost" (p.160), Hauser revisited a Tallahassee oyster bar from her PhD days at Florida State. "Bird's is the place I love and miss the most in the South."



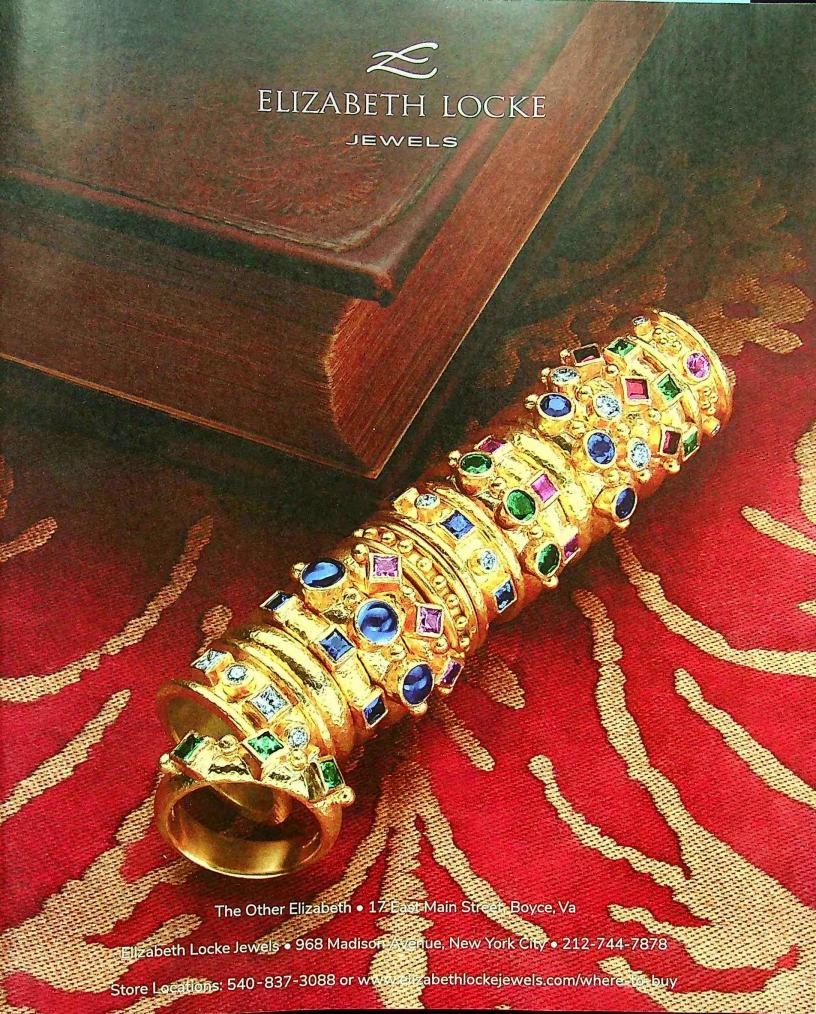
Charles Gaines WRITER

Charles Gaines has cast into turquoise creeks in Patagonia, mountain tributaries in Slovenia, the Margaree River in Nova Scotia (where he lives half the year), the bass lake at his home in Alabama. and the chalk streams of England, which he chronicles in "On Chalk Time" (p.130). "Fishing for me is not so much about the actual fish anymore, but about the whole experience," he says. "The people, the culture, the landscape, the history." He has written more than two dozen books, including the best seller Pumping Iron, on bodybuilding, and is working on a novel. A bit of trivia: In the 1980s, Gaines helped invent the game of paintball.



Margaret H. Dominick PHOTO EDITOR

At age eight, Margaret Houston Dominick learned to work a 35-millimeter film camera; since then, she's earned a photography degree from Roanoke College, and she joined the G&G photo department in 2011. She's brought her lens to G&G subjects including a plant nursery in her hometown of Augusta, Georgia, and a rice farmer near Savannah. As photo editor, Dominick coordinates shoots, including "Champions of Conservation" (p. 115), "I love finding new photographers and matching them with projects," she says. "I'm always excited to see a shoot come in, and to look for that one showstopping image that jumps out."



Adventure Capitalist

A LEADER IN GREEN CITY LIVING, ASHEVILLE IS AN OASIS FOR OUTDOORS ENTHUSIASTS

ne of the oldest rivers in the world runs through Western North Carolina. Its pristine waters wind their way through the region's mountains, and as it flows, it creates unique recreational opportunities for those wishing to enter its current. The French Broad River is one of the many features that allowed the city of Asheville to become an outdoor hub for adventurers, and it is the perfect place to explore one of the South's most sustainable outdoor sporting destinations.

Former river guide Shelton Steele saw opportunity along the banks of the French Broad. He grew up in this area, and when it came time for him to contribute to the community, he wanted to celebrate the river that shaped his upbringing. The French Broad is one of the few rivers that flow north instead of south. Steele and Joe Balcken used this fact as their inspiration to cofound Wrong Way River Lodge & Cabins. Located in West Asheville and tucked into a bend of the river, the rustic site features sixteen A-frame cabins and a communal river lodge where locals and visitors can gather to eat, drink, and shop.

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"I'm a person that likes to share places," Steele says. "I would take friends to these places that are special to me and create experiences with them. Creating a space like this, where locals and visitors can hang out together at the lodge, is my way of trying to share it with folks that are interested." Wrong Way is part of the up-and-coming Amboy Adventure Corridor, a series of outdoor recreation companies located along the French Broad. More

Clockwise from above: Wrong Way River Lodge & Cabins features sixteen creature-comfort-filled A-frome cabins; Biltmore has twenty miles of hiking and biking paths; inside a Wrong Way River Lodge & Cabins A-frame.

than that, it's a jumping-off point for voluntourism. Wrong Way invites visitors to support Asheville nonprofits in service projects, like stream cleanups and invasive species removals, to keep Asheville the beautiful outdoor playground it is—a perfect example of the city's sustainability-first mindset.

With easy access to the vibrant, eclectic River Arts District, Wrong Way River Lodge & Cabins sits in the middle of a multifaceted scene close to spectacular outdoor landmarks like Pisgah National Forest, Green River Preserve, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Grab your bike, hiking boots, or tennis shoes and within minutes you can be in a tranquil forest or at the heart of the city of Asheville.

Asheville's powerful sense of place as an outdoor hub is what draws so many guests—from day-trippers to extended-stay world travelers. Events like Get in Gear Fest provide people with a place to test out and purchase outdoor goods made by local gear companies. In fact, the outdoor adventurers love Asheville so much that they want to make sure it is around for future generations to enjoy, and they share resources and ideas about how to sustain this unique environment. Some like it enough to relocate.

Eagles Nest Outfitters (ENO), known for its eco-friendly hammocks—designed to meet strict safety and environmental requirements that limit the impact on people and the planet—started out in Florida but relocated to Asheville almost twenty years ago. "I knew Asheville was an outdoor mecca with a thriving outdoor community and many up-and-coming outdoor brands," says Pete Pinholster, the company's cofounder and co-owner. "Relocating to Asheville was a strategic move that allowed us to be around other



like-minded outdoor entrepreneurs and gear designers." The company's colorful hammocks provide a tool for visitors to hang out across Western North Carolina. And as a bonus, ENO plants a tree for every hammock purchased.

"The pull of the area is the love of the outdoors, and a big part of that is the natural assets that we have. This is a big area of whitewater, and there are endless hiking and mountain biking trails. Even just walking out of the grocery store, you catch a glimpse of the mountains, and it is just breathtaking," Anna Rawlins of ENO says.

No matter how you choose to opt outside in Asheville, the adventure will take you on a sensory journey.

For those seeking an upscale stay, Biltmore offers a unique outdoor experience with some luxury touches built in. This French Renaissance château estate, built by George Vanderbilt II, includes a section of the French Broad River on the eight-thousand-acre property, and eager water lovers can kayak, take a guided raft trip, or do some fly fishing.

"For the introductory fly-fishing experience, our instructors teach the skill of casting a fly in a 'dry' casting field next to the Lagoon," says LeeAnn Donnelly, Biltmore's senior public relations manager. "From there, the lesson moves to the Lagoon or an estate lake where participants can fish from a drift boat. Full-day fly-fishing trips are also available,

and we include lunch from an estate restaurant."

Along with interactive activities, the property offers visitors the chance to wander the seventy-five acres of formal and informal gardens designed by renowned American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted at their own leisurely pace or partake in guided adventures like the West Range Loop Guided Bike Ride, which provides riders with the opportunity to travel through the estate's vineyards and along its pastures as they explore the less visited Long Valley Lake area. The ability to enjoy the enduring beauty of the estate is in large part due to Vanderbilt's forward-thinking approach to land stewardship. Long before the term sustainability was common parlance, Vanderbilt helped launch the modern forest management movement by hiring trained foresters Gifford Pinchot and later Carl A. Schenck to maintain his vast land holdings, a fact that's allowed them to thrive for over a century.

As history can attest, Ashevillians have always been ahead of the curve when it comes to protecting and preserving the serene environment and lush habitat of this extraordinary outdoor adventure capital. For travelers who are also interested in investing in an environmentally responsible escape, there's no better destination to explore.

Learn more about Asheville and plan your own adventure at ExploreAsheville.com



Beyond City Limits

Add intrigue to your Asheville adventure with these wild activities

The North Carolina Arboretum

With bike paths and dog-friendly hiking trails as well as geocaching, and engaging indoor and outdoor region-specific garden exhibits, the North Carolina Arboretum offers a way for visitors of all ages and abilities to explore nature. ncarboretum.org

Asheville Hike Finder

In Asheville, there is no shortage of hikes to discover. Whittling down the options is the real challenge. With the Asheville Hike Finder, trekkers can narrow down their paths by difficulty, length, and distance from downtown Asheville. exploreasheville.com

Bellyak Boating

A newway to experience the river was pioneered on the French Broad: bellyak-ing. The sport, a blend of kayaking and swimming, requires lying face-first on a Bellyak and surfing into the waves. bellyak.com

Asheville Treetops Adventure Park

Once you've seen Asheville from the ground, you can take to the skies at Asheville Treetops Adventure Park. It's located five minutes from downtown, and daring adventurers seeking to defy gravity can zip through the trees. The attraction also features an area called KidZip, the country's first zip-line adventure for children under ten. ashevilletreetopsadventurepark.com



"The crow found the squash frustratingly irresistible, and oddly, its sentiments mirror my own"

ALL IN THE FAMILY

I loved David DiBenedetto's story on his Dutch oven recovery (Editor's Letter, August/September 2022) and wanted to share a technique my grandmother used in South Louisiana to bring her cast iron back to life: She would make a hot fire and put the pots and skillets in it until all of the "junk" was removed, and then clean them up and oil them again. I still use the process today.

Stefan Speligene Franklin, Tennessee

I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed T. Edward Nickens's story about the resurgence of side-by-side shotguns (Sporting Scene, June/July 2022). In 1927, my grandfather traded a bird dog for a new Ithaca side-by-side I6-gauge with a quail engraved on one side and a woodcock on the other. He shot it until the 1950s when he gave it to my father, who shot it until the 1980s before giving it to me. For ducks and geese, I switch to a Parker side-by-side I2-gauge with 30-inch barrels. I always accuse my partners in the blind who are using an automatic that their third shot is like cheating.

S. Waite Rawls III Richmond, Virginia

My grandmother was born in 1888, and I have her recipe for beaten biscuits (Traditions, August/September 2022). I remember eating them at her house, then later making them with my dad and then with my husband. It was twenty minutes of beating the dough with a hammer until it snapped.

Sue Melson Ivey Mount Pleasant, South Carolina Thank you, G&G and Maurice Manning, for the poetry, the time travel, and the glory of the story of the beaten biscuit. My tongue is dancing with the delight of the ghostly thing.

Trilby Malinn Idzerda Pineview, Georgia

MIGHTY FINE DINING

I've been drooling since the August/ September issue arrived in my mailbox but the airline voucher to get me down South was missing!

Lillie Bookman Seeger Weymouth, Massachusetts

I began reading the August/September issue outside on the patio and accident-ally left it on the table overnight. As I sipped my coffee the next morning, I looked through the window and noticed a bird pecking at the cover. Tip of the hat to Nashville's Silver Sands Cafe and the photographic artistry of Emily Dorio. The crow found the squash frustratingly irresistible, and oddly, its sentiments mirror my own.

Maura Coghlan-Richardson Manchester, Washington

As a transplant from Tampa some thirty-nine years ago, I have been floored by your last two issues. The June/July article about Cuban sandwiches (Fork in the Road) left me with warm feelings about the long-standing rivalry between Miami's and Tampa's versions (Tampa's is superior). Then, the August/September issue mentioned the West Tampa Sandwich Shop, which was and remains my go-to spot when I am back home for visits ("Appetite for Travel"). I always try





to sit under the picture of my mother and stepdad, one of the many photos posted on the walls of this incredible spot. And yes, they make the best café con leche I have ever tasted—with the exception of my grandmother's.

John Matus Point Clear, Alabama

Guy Martin's discussion of okra (Ask G&G, August/September 2022) completely omits what Southerners primarily do with okra, which is fry it! When you fry, there is no slime—it's just crunchy on the outside and smooth on the inside. It's easy and fast to make, plus, all of us living in the South know that okra pods can grow two to three inches overnight during hot summers, so it's plentiful and cheap.

Jim McAllister Asheville, North Carolina

MASTERS OF THEIR CRAFTS

Knives have always intrigued me, and the ones Quintin Middleton makes are so beautiful (Tools, June/July 2022). To me, the wave pattern of the Damascus steel tells the story of a voyage from a beloved homeland to a country of sustained oppression for so many people for far toolong.

Mercedes Cosgrove Clemmons, North Carolina

More Helen Ellis, please ("27 Cool Ideas for Summer," June/July 2022)! She is the most enjoyable read this side of Julia Reed.

Gary Alford St. Augustine, Florida

lenjoyed the article on love languages by Vivian Howard (Country Accent, August/September 2022). I was blessed to be raised in a family of huggers. Vivian: Your coded love language will be perfect for someone else out there, and your French bulldog, Tina, is good for hugging practice.

Karen Clark Pounds Rock Hill, South Carolina

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The article "Sign Language" by Roy Blount Jr. (End of the Line, August/September 2022) made me think of the best NOLA sign I remember. I lived in New Orleans in the eighties and drove past a typecast, paint-peeling neighborhood bar every morning. One day a fellow stumbled out at 7:00 a.m., shielding his eyes in a vampire-like fashion, and collapsed back inside. I then noticed a hand-painted sign that read, FREE BEER TOMORROW.

Jeff Lacoste Biloxi, Mississippi

I love finishing each Garden & Gun with Roy Blount Jr.'s words. He is like the cherry atop a delicious sundae. His latest on reading between the lines in New Orleans was great, and while I have not seen this one in the Big Easy, my favorite sign is worth a mention: I LOVE NIGHTS I CAN'T REMEMBER WITH THE FRIENDS I CAN'T FORGET!

Mary Lassiter Louisville, Kentucky

SMALL WORLD

As I was sitting in my wife's fancy California salon waiting for her to finish, I looked over and saw this crazy title stuck between the Us and People magazines: Garden & Gun. Within minutes I was almost crying reading about a woman having to put her dog down (Good Dog, April/May 2022) and then was laughing so hard at a pickup truck article that I could hardly breathe ("The Long Haul," April/May 2022). I have never been so moved in the space of five minutes.

Larry Pfoutz San Diego, California

During my many years, I've catalogued precious experiences all over G&G's geography, from birth and rearing in North Georgia to regular summer vacations on the Florida Panhandle. I've seen the Blue Ridge Parkway from a road bike and walked the backbone of those mountains with my children along the Appalachian Trail. My wife and I have wandered aimlessly around Asheville and sampled the bed-and-breakfast circuit, and most recently I sailed the Golden Isles with my son. Nowadays, it is with great anticipation that I go page by page through each issue hoping to find a new narrative on an old experience. Thanks for taking me back.

Ron Gudger Dunwoody, Georgia

Social Chatter

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On Facebook, on Twitter, and in our *Talk of the South* newsletter, readers told their sweetest, silliest, and shortest dog tales.

He's my daily under-desk companion. Cassie W.

She was the best girl. Greg M.

Great Pyrenees is a lapdog. Joel H.

Bulldog flatulence forced soiree evacuation. Tom S.

Dogs met, played. We married. Ann B.

Not on my new boots! Steve S.

Fed stray fajitas. Buddy stayed. Jason F.

Dogs don't live long enough. Toni B.

His one blue eye mesmerizes, Lee H.

Roomba went through dog poop. Tracey R.

Three-legged pit bull ain't scary. Kim G.

We thought she was fixed. Michelle P.

We are family, us two. Suzanne W.

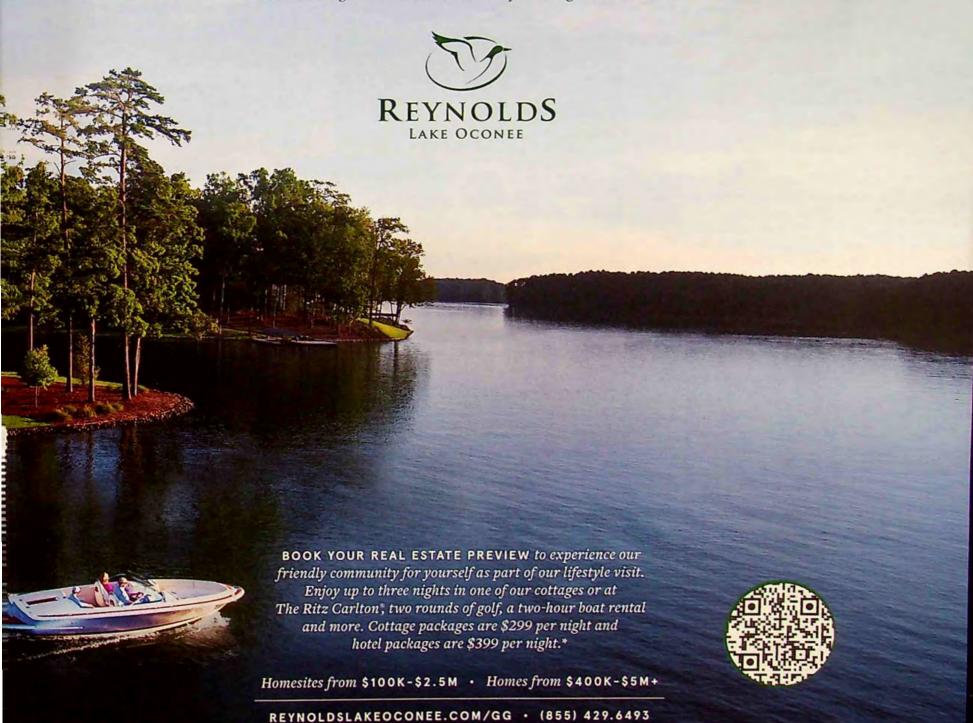




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RECIPES

Thanksgiving Menu Planner

You may be loyal to Aunt Lucy's mashed potatoes, but G&G has plenty of other ideas for filling your holiday table. You'll find recipes for no-fail turkey, smoky duck and andouille gumbo, and more festive mains, sides, appetizers, cocktails, and desserts in our Thanksgiving Favorites collection.

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WHAT'S NINE

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Nyx, a 2021 runner-up, from North Carolina.

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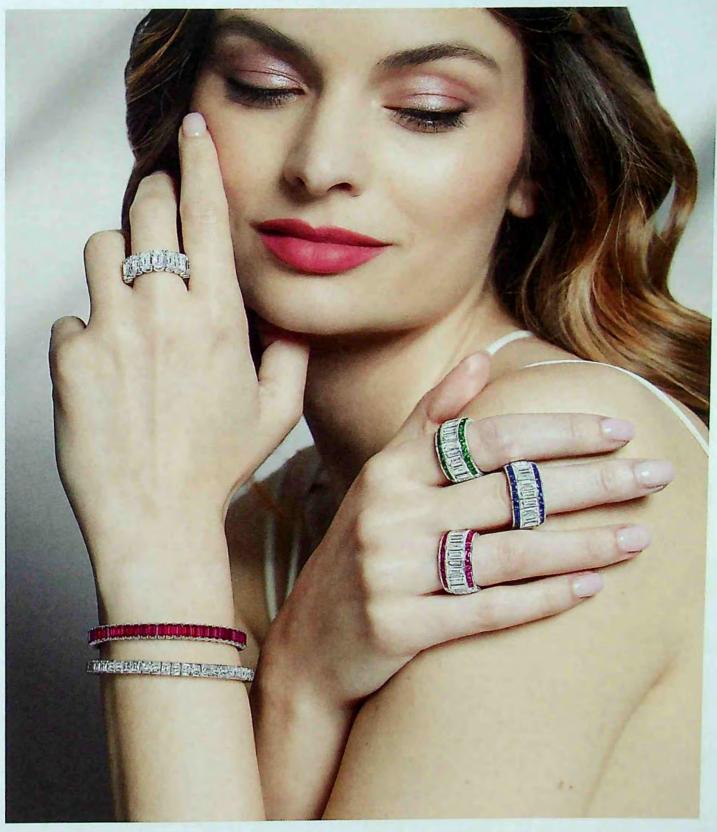
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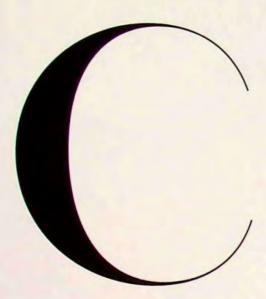


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Texas Ranger

CHARLEY CROCKETT
BLAZED HIS OWN
TRAIL TO BECOME ONE
OF MUSIC'S MOST
COMPELLING VOICES
By Matt Hendrickson



Charley Crockett is making up for lost time. In the past seven years, the Texas native has released twelve albums, including his sublime new effort, The Man from Waco. But Crockett's career got off to a late start. After leaving home as a teenager with a guitar his mother got him from a pawnshop, he began playing and living on the streets in Dallas and around the country, including the French Quarter in New Orleans and New York City, performing for tips on the subway. His talent was undeniable. After hearing him play, an executive from Sony Music offered him a record deal right there on the R train.

Sony wanted to make Crockett the next countrypop superstar, but Crockett had zero interest in molding his traditional blues and country sounds to meet expectations. He self-released his debut, A Stolen Jewel, in 2015, when he was thirty-one, and a follow-up the next year before finding a willing label partner in Nashville's Thirty Tigers. Now living in Austin, he has made what feels like a career-defining album. His sound has always been sparse and lonesome, but on The Man from Waco, it flourishes with the laid-back rhythm and blues of the Gulf Coast, his trademark desert country, and his deep, rich baritone, with assistance from his crack backing band, the Blue Drifters, who joined Crockett in the studio for the first time from start to finish. "I know a lot about myself and the fight I had to do what I want," he says. "But the beauty of the art comes from the struggle."

Crockett, photographed outside Taos, New Mexico. His new album is called The Man from Waco. Previous page: The Texas native received this 1930s Le Domino parlor guitor as a gift from a friend.





What kinds of songs would you play on the streets? A lot of traditional music, but the stuff that went over the best was the drinking songs. Everything from Ernest Tubb to John Lee Hooker-type drinking songs. I remember playing Hank Williams's "My Bucket's Got a Hole in It" on Royal Street in New Orleans, and then I'd be down on Frenchmen in the evening, playing "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer," the John Lee Hooker version. And then lots of Bob Dylan.

Dylan has a credit on your new album, and you're obviously a huge fan.

I was obsessed with Dylan's 1973 album Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid and was listening to some outtakes, and there was a song he never finished called "Tom Turkey," so I just incorporated some of his elements into my version of the song. It all comes back to Dylan for me. Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings are labeled outlaws, and I love all those guys a lot. Willie's taken me out on the road with him and done a lot of cool stuff with me. But Bob Dylan broke all the rules. He's so much more of an outlaw than anyone's ever given him credit for.

What's your songwriting process? I write daily, but it's not scheduled. And truth be told, I haven't written down a song in years.

Seriously? How do you remember them?

Repetition, man. When I was living on the street, I hit every open mic night I could. My songs are pretty simple, and I would just do them over and over. I learned how to lead bands during blues jams at bars in New Orleans and back-room places in Dallas. But that was hard because I never knew what key I was playing in. The club owners saw me playing in the street and assumed I knew what I was doing. I remember this guy who ran a club in New Orleans threw me out. The first time I played there it was with all the guys I was playing with on the street, and we just smoked it. I went back by myself, but I couldn't tell the house rhythm section what to play. The friend who came with me got into a fistfight with the sound guy. We were lucky we didn't get arrested. I remember [the owner] telling me: "Man. learn a f**king blues song and know what key you're in. Come back when you got that down." I was mad at him, but ultimately, I realized he was right.

It's rare for an artist to put out a dozen records in seven years. You obviously have confidence in your work. Have your expectations for success increased now?

Idon't expect this new one to sell well. I mean, it will be fine, but the game you have to play to write a hit and break through with radio is just wack. I don't want to

make any stupid decisions today to try to get ahead in the short term, because I feel pretty good about how I'm going to be viewed thirty years from now versus the people around me.

Your videos and album art have this timeless, weathered look, like what you would see in spaghetti Westerns like Sergio Leone's The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. What appeals to you about that genre?

What I think was so cool about Leone and the Italian directors in general was that they took the idea of John Ford's American West and completely reinvented it. The Good, the Bad and the Ugly has so many critiques of the nature of people and societies. I feel like that whole movie is exposing the insanity of the Civil War. I've probably watched it three hundred times.

You're pals with Leon Bridges, who is from Fort Worth. How has he influenced you?

We've been friends from all the way back in the days when I couldn't get a legit gig on a stage in [the East Dallas neighborhood] Deep Ellum. Leon was talking me up before anybody. That dude always comes to my shows. He's been the one artist who has been a constant for me to look at and see how he has forged his own path. Everybody wanted him to just re-create his first record [2015's retro soul Coming Home], and they dogged him when he didn't. But he just kept going, and I've watched him reinvent himself. Plus, he's been patient with me over some dumb shit I've done over the years. [Laughs.]

Deep Ellum has long had a thriving music scene, but it kind of goes under the radar.

I've always thought that in the Southern American music heritage, you have three cities that make the true triangle: New Orleans, Memphis, and Dallas. Deep Ellum is unique because it's the neighborhood where the Black and white worlds of Dallas converged. One of the first Black commercial districts in Texas was in Deep Ellum, Robert Johnson is the king of the Delta blues, right? Well, half of his material was recorded in Dallas. Deep Ellum's heritage goes back to Blind Willie Johnson and T Bone Walker. Bob Wills recorded there. And as big as Dallas is, it's a very tight-knit music scene. What's interesting about Deep Ellum compared with places like Beale Street and the French Quarter is that it's managed to exist and survive despite complete neglect. There's been no focus on tourism like there is in Memphis and New Orleans.

So, here's the ultimate Texas question: Barbecue or tacos?

[Pauses for nearly ten seconds.] Man, that's tough. How about brisket tacos?



Rare Pairs

MIAMI'S ALEPEL COLLABORATES WITH ARTISTS TO CREATE TRULY SINGULAR FOOTWEAR

By Nila Do Simon

sapreschooler, Adriana Epelboim-Levy remembers, she slipped on her mother's heels in their Caracas, Venezuela, home and felt like not only the most beautiful girl in the world, but also an empowered one. "Everything came down to posture," she says. "It's like the base of a building: What's at the foundation of

your posture? Shoes."

Today, inside the North Miami office of her artful footwear and leather goods brand, Alepel, Epelboim-Levy has melded that desired function with artistically inspired form: Her shoes, handmade in her native South America, sport designs hand-painted by Florida artisans, including whirling botanicals, fanciful hummingbirds, abstract shapes, and other looks such as the precise black strokes adorning her own bright white sneakers.

The spark for Alepel ignited when Epelboim-Levy, a former architect who studied at New York's Pratt Institute, began looking for a creative outlet. When she and her husband, Meyer, moved back to Caracas for his job, she decided to dive into making accessible vet high-quality leather shoes for women. "I am so passionate about footwear," says Epelboim-Levy, who recalls regularly setting her alarm to be the first in line to purchase shoes at sample sales in New York City. "Around the time Alepel was developing, Christian Louboutin red soles were having their moment, so I felt the space and interest were there." She visited Italian and Brazilian factories and attended design classes offered by the prestigious Milan-based Arsutoria School.

Then an idea struck due to political turmoil in Venezuela. She reached out to a local artist to depict patriotic symbols on the shoes she designed to raise funds for those in need. The artist painted the country's national flower, tree, stars, and bird on the pairs. The limited collection sold out immediately, as Venezuelans living all over the world bought the shoes to support people in their homeland.

From there, Alepel took off, expanding to offer six silhouettes-mules, sandals, heels, loafers, slides, and sneakers-with a seventh, boots, on the way, in three base colors: white, beige, and black (with the occasional special-edition hue). "As an architect, I wanted everything to be minimalist except for one statement piece." Epelboim-Levy says. "That idea translated to Alepel, where any of the silhouettes themselves are simple, but the painted designs are what make them stand out."

When the designer and her family moved to Miami in 2018, she hired local artisans to paint the patterns she sketches and then digitizes. However, "at the end of the day, these artists become the designers," she says of the small-batch lines, which are available online. "They bring their own interpretation to the product." Those touches include butterflies extending their wings across the vamp of a mule, a cheetah jumping along the side of a sneaker, and infinite waves traversing a sandal.

Epelboim-Levy says Southerners have especially connected with the charming designs. In recent years she has added home goods and accessories to Alepel, including wine bags, vases, handbags, and card holders, and she is currently creating wallpaper prototypes. She also offers clients the option to personalize any of the leather products, plus the chance to work directly with an artisan on a custom piece, typically a three-week process. On a quiet Tuesday, in fact, artist Gabriela Milner sits at her drafting desk, methodically painting a pair of custom white heels. The subject? A future bride's beloved shih tzu.

Milner, a native of Argentina, pauses after a careful brushstroke to look at her work in progress and smiles. "Alepel customers are not only purchasing products, but they have personal feelings that are involved," she says of the designs. "That gives me happiness, and that makes my art feel happy." @



Hand-painted touches include butterflies extending their wings across the vamp of a mule and a cheetah jumping along the side of a sneaker





From top: Adriana Epelboim-Levy, photographed in Miami; a mule from Alepel's bridal collection.









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CONSERVATION

Feeding the Massives

IT'S ALL HANDS ON DECK TO SAVE FLORIDA'S STRUGGLING MANATEES

By Lindsey Liles

R

ecent winters have not been kind to Florida's gentle aquatic giants. Every November, many of the state's manatees chase warmer waters and move inland; unlike other marine mammals such as dolphins and whales, the sea cows lack insulating blubber and need balmy temperatures of 68°F or above to survive. Until springtime,

they huddle where they can find that warmth, grazing on seagrasses. Algal blooms caused by poor water quality, though, have lately devastated the seagrass supply—so far in 2022, 617 manatees have died, most of starvation; in 2021, the count totaled 1,100, making it one of the worst years on record for a population that totals roughly 8,000. Now a statewide network of biologists and nonprofits are piecing together a plan to pull the beloved species through the coming cold months.

Manatees, explains Carter Henne, are a tale of two coasts. "There's East Coast manatees and there's West Coast manatees," says Henne, the president of Sea & Shoreline, an aquatic restoration firm that works statewide to grow and plant vegetation such as seagrasses. The latter, along the Gulf of Mexico, are chugging along. Those on the Atlantic side are not.

That struggle stems from the Indian River Lagoon, a key watershed that supports the majority of those manatees. At the northern end of the 156-mile-long estuary sits the Cape Canaveral power plant. For years, instead of heading to natural springs as they would otherwise, manatees have gathered by the hundreds around the plant's outflow of warm water, passing down genera-

tional knowledge of the spot. But leaking septic tanks, coupled with fertilizer runoff from yards and farms, have contributed to a series of devastating algal blooms for more than a decade. The algae block sunlight from reaching the lagoon's floor,

choking the seagrasses. Then came 2018, a particularly rough year. "And that's when the bottom of the system finally fell out," says Andy Garrett, the manatee rescue coordinator for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

An adult manatee, which weighs around a thousand pounds, eats about 4 to 7 percent of its body weight a day. Without enough grass, an animal at the power plant faces a horrific choice: Venture out looking for food and freeze to death, or stay in the warm water and starve. And there's not a quick fix; it's difficult for sea-

grasses to bounce back because the bits that remain are so overgrazed, they can't seed. The grasses also act as a crucial filter; without their regulating water quality, "it's a chicken and the egg situation," Henne explains. "There's low seagrass because there's low light, and there's low light because there's low seagrass." Simply put: "There's not enough salad in the salad bowl."

To prevent starvation, "we are looking for interim strategies," says Andy Walker, president of the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida, the nonprofit that last year raised funds to buy an emergency 202,000 pounds of lettuce to feed manatees. At one time, scientists counted 836 of them feasting on the romaine and butter leaf by the power plant. "Thirty-five pounds of lettuce each isn't a lot for these animals," Walker says, "but we're hoping it was the edge they needed to get through the winter. And if we need to feed every year until the seagrass is back, that's what we'll do."

On a larger scale, biologists hope that the spotlight on the starving animals will illuminate the importance of seagrasses in an ecosystem. The vast underwater meadows provide refuge and food for thousands of other species, including fish, crabs, and seahorses. An estimated 90 percent of commercial seafood species rely on seagrass at some stage of their lives. And, Walker points out, "this system was on life support before manatees were affected. They aren't the canaries in the coal mine—they are the last ones to get the memo."

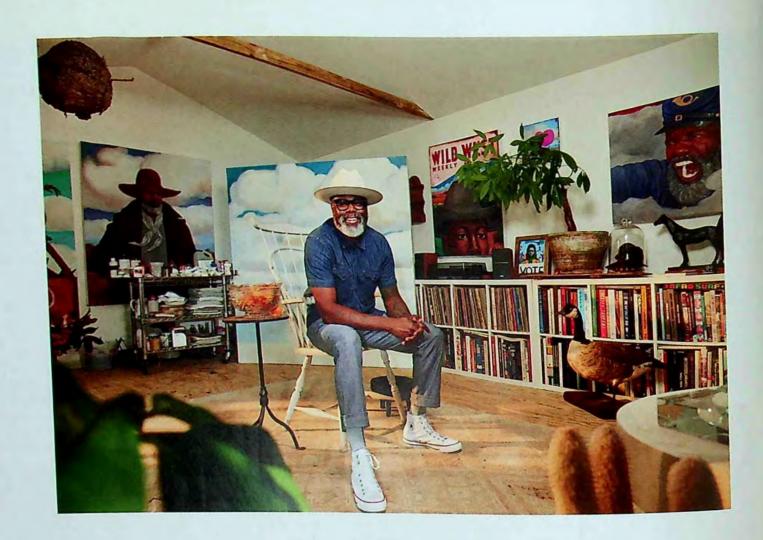
Thankfully, Henne and his team have experience restoring a system. They and the nonprofit Save Crystal River turned around that once heavily polluted,

alga-dominated waterway, now a haven for Gulf Coast manatees. For the long term, Henne is growing eelgrass in nurseries to plant upstream in the Indian River Lagoon, in the hopes the grasses can get a foothold, start seeding, and exponentially expand.

In the short term, federal and state agencies and partners are preparing to help the manatees this winter. Additional zoos are signing on to rehabilitate emaciated animals; Garrett will be ready to coordinate rescues; Walker is in talks with lettuce companies about emergency feeding; and Henne will be using the quiet season to plant more grasses. "Floridians are very proud of what makes us unique, whether it's sunshine, oranges, beaches, or manatees," Henne says. "And this is the home of manatees. They are part of our heritage, our culture, and we're going to fight for them."

A sea cow in Weeki Wachee Springs; on Florida's Atlantic side, pollution has decimated the food supply.





ARTS

American Canvas

CEDRIC SMITH PAINTS HIMSELF INTO THE NATION'S HISTORY

By Kelundra Smith



s a child, Cedric Smith loved Western movies. Seeing cowboys conquer the terrain on majestic horses made him want to ride alongside them. But in those films-and largely across pop culture-he never saw Black people. As an artist, he aims to address that historic lack of representation.

In his color-saturated acrylic and oil paintings, for instance, Smith re-creates advertisements for the likes of whiskey and high-end fashion brands with Black people. And he plays with Southern Americana by placing old photos of Black people that he finds at thrift stores against lush backgrounds of magnolias, cotton, and peaches. "I love stuff from the past, especially since there aren't a lot of old images of American Black people," Smith says. "I have boxes of old photographs that people gave away or threw away. It's amazing to me that people have pictures of their family and don't keep them."

Smith, who is fifty-two, was born in Philadelphia but spent most of his life in Lithonia, Georgia, where he lived with his mother and younger sister. He had an early affinity for art, but a devastating event in his teen years sparked the initial flicker that lit the flame of his

painting career. When Smith was a high school freshman, a few of his friends committed an armed robbery, unbeknownst to him. Police arrested all the boys after school one day, even though Smith wasn't

The artist surrounded by his work in his backyard studio in Macon, Georgia.

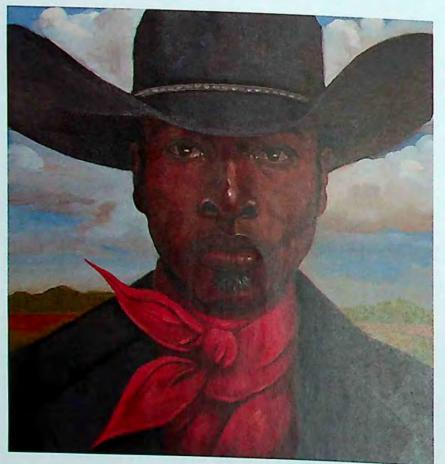


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TALKOF THESOUTH





From top: Just Beyond Those Mountains and Red Wild Rag, two oil-on-canvas works Smith completed this year.

involved. He spent a year in juvenile detention.

"I used to see so much talent when I was locked up,"Smith recalls. "These guys could sing, some were mathematicians-it blew my mind....It's not to make excuses for all of us, but sometimes you fall along the path that's before you at that time. That's why with my art, I'm always trying to show positive portrayals of Black people."

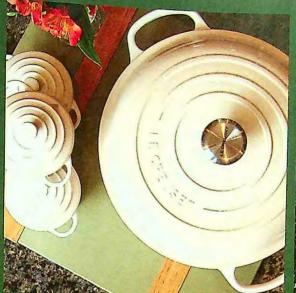
After his release, Smith spent the next few years teaching himself to paint in his free time, doing odd jobs and apprenticing as a barber. One of his clients was the world-renowned painter William Tolliver, who invited Smith to see his studio. For the first time, Smith realized he could make a living as an artist. He put in his two-week notice at the shop and never looked back. Since then, his work has appeared in exhibitions at such esteemed venues as Curtiss Jacobs Gallery in $New York, Fay Gold \,Gallery \,in \,Atlanta, and \,Charlotte's$ Mint Museum, and it hangs in the permanent collections of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Coca-Cola, the New-York Historical Society, and other institutions.

For Smith, painting offers the kind of freedom he sawinthose Hollywood cowboys. Lately, at his studio in Macon, Georgia, he has been working on a series depicting them. In every collection, Smith does a selfportrait. In one piece, he rests his hand on a revolver, a brilliant blue sky behind him. Hanging on the wall next to that one, he's dressed in denim on the back of a horse. On the opposite wall, he's a Civil War officer shouting commands, his head surrounded by billowing gray-blue smoke. (The paintings will be featured in a solo exhibition at the University of Alabama's Paul R. Jones Museum, from October 7 to December 17.) "As a child, I assumed there weren't Black cowboys, and then later I learned about Bill Pickett," Smith says. "Whenever I learn something new, I wonder how many other people don't know that. That's how it starts."

A student of life, Smith has lined the back wall of his studio with shelves of inspiring books whose topics range from Lowcountry rice farming to various species of flora. Treasures such as turtle shells, dried flowers, and animal skulls in bell jars sit on top. The more books in which he finds faces that look like his, the more he is driven to paint. "I'm using old photographs to talk about modern issues," he says, including hot-button topics like voting, school shootings, and reproductive health care. "I'm just a sponge, and every now and again, something or somebody squeezes me out."

But he also wants to paint Black people back into the history from which they've been excluded, for the next generation-motivated by a desire to influence young people who simply need to see new possibilities for themselves, as he once did. "A lot of Black kids feel like America has disowned or doesn't care about them," Smith says. "As I see what we've contributed in America, maybe it will help steer them in another direction, to see how valuable and great we were and still are." 🖪









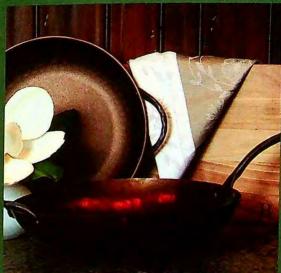
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Seeing Specks

ARKANSAS WATERFOWL HUNTERS TAKE AIM AT A NEW ARRIVAL

By T. Edward Nickens

A

t first, in the 1990s, a few greater whitefronted geese trickled in to Southeast Arkansas each winter, but Chase Milligan didn't think much about it. "I was a duck hunter, like everybody else around here," the Dumas, Arkansas, native says matterof-factly. "And ducks are what we had."

At the time, the increase in the region's numbers of specklebellies—the nickname for these cousins to the better-known Canada goose—happened gradually enough that Milligan figured it was driven by an overall population increase in the birds. Then, about 2005, "it was like the dam busted," Milligan recalls. "There were just so many. That's when we knew we had to be getting someone else's geese."

Today, Milligan reports, he doesn't even slow down when he sees a feeding flock of one hundred white-fronts. He's looking for fields with three and four times that number. And he's now guiding specklebelly goose hunts in a region where that was unheard of just a short while ago.

In fact, a dramatic shift in the winter range of greater white-fronted geese has scrambled the future for many Texas and Louisiana hunting guides, while giving hunters in Arkansas a welcome new resource to tar-



A greater whitefronted goose, also known as a specklebelly. get. "Beginning in the late 1980s, we've seen an entire population move east and north," explains Douglas Osborne, professor of wildlife management and ecology at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, and a leading researcher on white-fronted goose ecology. "This is not a range expansion. It's a full shift in distribution, the result of several drivers including urban development and agricultural expansion, decline in coastal wetland marsh, and a change in climate."

Today, Osborne estimates, there are between three and five million greater white-fronted geese in the Mississippi and Central Flyways, and whereas most of that population once wintered along the Texas and Louisiana coasts, many now put down roots in eastern Arkansas. Osborne figures a large proportion of the midcontinent population stops over in Arkansas during the winter.

A bit smaller than a Canada goose, a specklebelly is a gorgeous animal, with a brindled chest with heavy dark barring and eponymous white facial markings. In flight, white-fronted geese call with a high-pitched two- and three-note yelping cackle that sounds like airborne laughter. The birds respond well to calling, are prone to swing over decoys, and are considered one of the finest table birds of all ducks and geese.

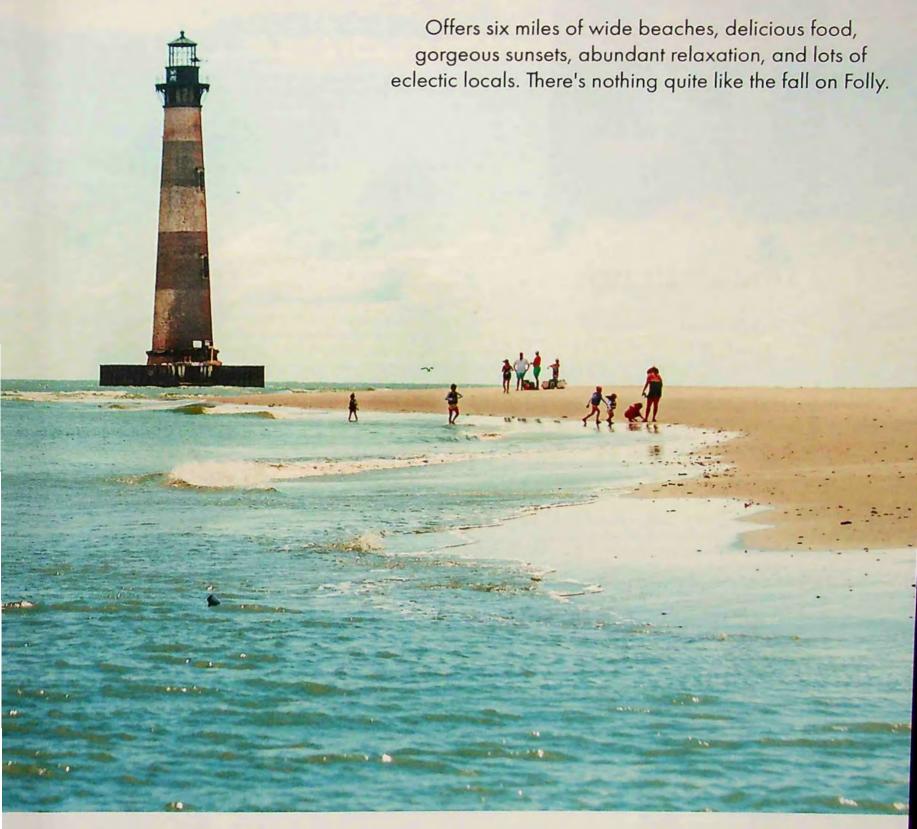
Several factors are pushing the birds east and north in the winter. In Texas, the conversion of rice fields to sugarcane has whittled away at wintering habitat, as has development around Houston and Galveston. Meanwhile, a warming climate at the Arctic breeding grounds has resulted in a longer growing season, which converts to higher rates of goose reproduction.

One concern is that all those extra mouths to feed could affect wintering ducks. Specklebellies begin to arrive in late September and early October. Are there enough calories on the landscape to support another few hundred thousand geese? It's an open question. "The geese have a different life history strategy," Osborne explains. "The advantage of an early migration strategy is that the geese have a competitive advantage to acquiring the residual rice left in the fields over many species of ducks. They feed heavily on rice and build fat reserves for winter, so that in the case of a harsh winter or low food resources, they can increase their chances of survival."

As for the ducks, it comes down to the basics. "You get to the crawfish boil late," Osborne says, "and there might be only a few crawfish left over and the beer is gone. You start looking for another party."

But for now, the loss to Texas hunters and guides is a gain for their Arkansas colleagues. Beginning next year, Arkansas will bump up the daily limit for white-fronted geese from two to three birds. And Milligan, who runs Wild Goose Chase outfitters, hunts geese exclusively upwards of seventy days a year and is nearly booked out for the coming season. "I just hope they stay here," he says, acknowledging that there's no guarantee the specklebelly shuffle won't happen again.

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BOOKS

Double Punch

CORMAC McCARTHY DELIVERS BACK-TO-BACK KNOCKOUTS

By Jonathan Miles

he last time we had a new novel from Cormac McCarthy, Enron and JonBenet Ramsey were in the headlines, more than a hundred thousand U.S. troops were in Iraq, the University of Alabama football team was eking out a losing season, and a hundred million users were making Myspace.com the world's most visited

website. Folks, it's been a minute.

But now we have two new Cormac McCarthy novels. (Or will shortly, since McCarthy's publisher is staggering their releases by dropping one in late October and the other in early December.) For the bookish public, that's a headline in itself. The notoriously private eighty-nine-year-old author of Blood Meridian, All the Pretty Horses, and The Road reigns as a titan of American lit-an undisputed heir to Melville and Faulkner, the subject of infinite grad-school theses, and a hardnosed dispenser of what Saul Bellow called "life-giving and death-dealing sentences." Since 1965, when his first book (The Orchard Keeper) appeared, he's been turning paper and ink into thunder and lightning.

The Passenger is the novel making landfall first. If you pay attention to the promotional copy, you might think you're cracking an old Alistair MacLean thriller from the seventies: "A Sunken Jet. Nine Passengers. A Missing Body." Best to ignore that, however, because that's decidedly not what you're cracking. Your first clue will be the prose: "In that dusky penetralium they press about the crucible shoving and gibbering while the deep heresiarch dark in his folded cloak urges them on in their efforts. And then what thing unspeakable is this raised dripping up through crust and calyx from what hellish marinade." Hot damn! It's the humid, fevered, magniloquent, Bible-cadenced,

comma-starved, word-drunk prose of what some fans consider McCarthy's masterwork, Suttree, his 1979 novel about vagrant life on the Knoxville waterfront.

The Gulf Coast provides the waterfront this time around. Near Pass Christian, Mississippi, a New Orleans salvage divernamed Bobby Western comes upon that mysteriously submerged plane and its dead passengers in the fall of 1980. And though a pair of federal agents comes sniffing around, and a few more riddles bubble forth, the sunken jet essentially serves as a four-engine MacGuffin that fades out by midnovel. The more pressing mysteries start whirling around Western himself: Tennessee-born son of a nuclear physicist and atomic bomb maker; brother to a late math prodigy with schizophrenia; one time Formula 2 race-cardriver; and friend and confidant to a Suttreelevel menagerie of barflies, misfits, philosophers, and French Quarter crackpots. The Passenger toggles between Western's beery, pensive rambles and the hallucinations of Alicia Western, Bobby's brilliant sister, in which she's devotedly harangued by a fast-talking dwarf with flipper-like hands who's known to her as the Thalidomide Kid. There's a lot here. Your mind might spin. The novel is veined with meandering conversations that swerve from the dimensions of string theory to Kennedy assassination conspiracies to why the f-word, as a noun, requires an adjective to the "indeterminacy of reality itself." Yet what it all adds up to-perhaps surprisingly-is a doomed and unsettling love story, a Platonic tragedy.

Stella Maris, the other novel, is a companion piece to The Passenger. It's a transcript-no actions, no descriptions, no identifiers-of seven of Alicia Western's sessions at a Wisconsin psychiatric hospital in 1972. Her beleaguered psychiatrist just struggles, most of the time, to keep up with his twenty-year-old patient, who is both a smart-ass and a genius. She graduated from the University of Chicago at seventeen; the reallife mathematician Alexander Grothendieck was her mentor; and she knows absolutely everything about the universe except how to exist in it. "What would you change if you could change anything?" he asks her. "I'd elect not to be here," she answers. "In this consultation," he clarifies. "On this planet," she replies. The conversations in Stella Maris also swerve, from Spengler to Oppenheimer to Kant to Feynman to the truth of the universelying on the other side of partial differential equations. Alicia Western is fluent in every equation known to humankind; but the only equation she needs is one that can explain her heart and its desires.

Taken together, The Passenger and Stella Maris are an intellectually breathtaking achievement, an electric and thunderous attempt, as the Thalidomide Kid says to Bobby, to "get hold of the world." Not that such is possible, according to the Kid. No, "you can only draw a picture," he says. "Whether it's a bull on the wall of a cave or a partial differential equation"-or an astonishing pair of novels-"it's all the same thing." @



More Epic **Fall Fiction**

An empathetic look at misunderstood Appalachia

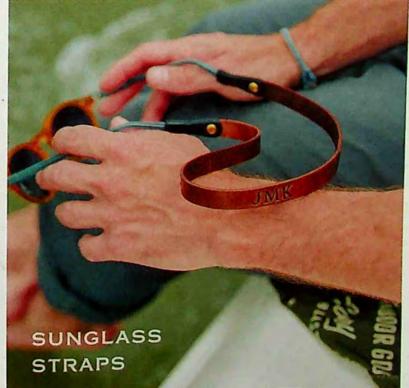
Barbara Kingsolver, who lives in southwest Virginia, turns out both highly praised fiction-Flight Behavior, The Poisonwood Bible-and nonfiction, including the best seller Animal, Vegetable, Miracle. In her new novel, Demon Copperhead (Harper), she takes as inspiration David Copperfield, but sets it mostly in the 2000s in Lee County, Virginia, home to bean-andcornbread suppers, Friday night football, and an economy that lurohes from farming and coal mining to prescription pill swapping. Kingsolver's nature writing gleams-moss in the deer-hunting woods, tobacco harvested by hand—as does her understanding of rural ways and overlooked histories, like that of the orphaned main character, whose olive skin, green eyes, and copper hair mark him as a Melungeon, a mixed-race group some call the "Lost Tribe of Appalachia." This book is painful but hard to put down. Hope will pull you through.-CJLotz





GOODS BUILT FOR THE SPIRIT OF SUMMER









Main Squeeze

PYTHON BUDS, BAMBOO BARRIERS, AND COLT WHISPERING By Guy Martin





Does anybody still keep Burmese pythons as pets? Like the mix of toluene and nitrogen in TNT, the cocktail of non-native apex-predator pets and freakish human vanity can be trusted to explode. The largest specimens of Python bivittatus tip the scales at two hundred pounds, quite the load of carnivore to have around the house. Many python lovers fail to envision certain biological aspects of living with large predators, so, twenty feet of snake later, folks grow disenchanted by the constrictors' need to muscle out into the living room and crush the family border collie into an appetizing meatball. As Aristotle pointed out, our hubris knows no bounds. Buttressed by that most human flaw in Florida, former pets released over decades found their Eden in the Everglades, where the hundred-thousand-plus reptiles have wiped out the park's small mammals. Hurricane Andrew's 1992 destruction of a vainglorious Burmese python pet-breeding facility contributed to that dismal record, flooding the treasured wilderness with hundreds of young. On the bright side, the state has banned keeping them as pets and has beefed up its professional bounty-hunter program and its annual "pro-am" Florida Python Challenge in the Everglades, during which killing the largest monsters yields up to

\$2,500 in prizes. Great fun in the field, but it's a losing battle-python mamas can lay clutches of up to a hundred eggs annually. In their native Southeast Asia, deforestation has made the snake an endangered species. As the preacher notes in Ecclesiastes, all is vanity.

Bamboo can be the devil's curse in a garden, but can we responsibly use it to block out the neighbors? October's a golden minute for planting bamboo, right? Yet the crazy bamboo exigencies stand athwart you. The clumping varieties won't create that good green fence you want. Running varieties require rhizome barriers, sunk two feet deep, because those roots do merrily run, to the tune of some forty feet per season. But before you trough in fifty feet of barrier, please consider the location of the devil in the equation. He's not in the bamboo. He's waiting for you to return from your splendid month at the beach next summer, when you'll be prying those runners out from under the flagstones you laid around the drinks gazebo. Admittedly, some neighbors can make heaving sixty-pound flags feel like a breeze, but bamboo doesn't come with an off switch, so you'll see other tricks down the road. Why not pour a stiff dividend and have a think about putting in some old-fashioned lattice you can train a spray of fine roses to climb. Roses don't run from where you put them.

We want to break our new colt ourselves. Got tips? Not everything the cowboys did was right. The ride-'em-till-they-stop-buckin' path only teaches a young horse that his flight instinct-triggered by situations the animal senses could call for force—works perfectly. As with our two-legged young, that's not how you want your equine charges to view their education. Only in the last forty years have American training practices moved toward a more productive, biologically aware philosophy of enlisting the horse as your partner, extending gentle invitations to accomplish tasks and to acquaint him with people over time. Popularized here by John Lyons and the brothers Bill and Tom Dorrance since the 1980s, the approach has been with us since Xenophon, the great Greek soldier and horseman, published his magnum opus On Horsemanship around 355 BC. As the Southern Native American tribes domesticated the horses they got from the Spanish five hundred years ago, they began with gentle practices and have kept those in robust use. The Choctaw and other tribes largely eschewed European tack, preferring direct body-to-body communication. An 1875 account of a Cayuse horse race notes that a soft, woven-hair rope, sans bit, fixed around the lower jaw acted as the bridle. You want that level of trust with your new colt. Here's your lodestone: Reverse the "breaking" paradigm. A new colt is like a china shop; you don't want to break a thing in him or about him. Rather, teach yourself what your colt sees and thinks. Then, when you do finally mount up and let fly, the dialogue you'll have with your new partner will take your breath away.

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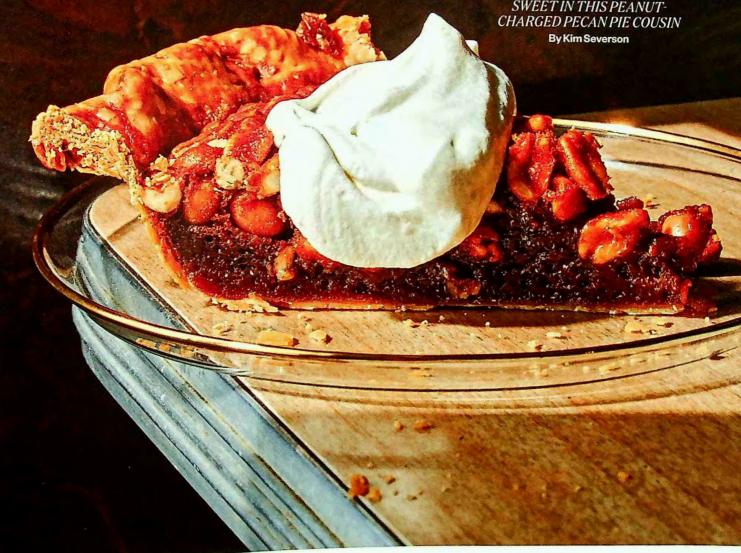
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BILE

ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC

Goober Pie

FOOD NETWORK STAR KARDEA BROWN BRINGS THE SWEET IN THIS PEANUT-CHARGED PECAN PIE COUSIN







MEETTHE CHEF: KARDEA BROWN

Hometown: Charleston, South Carolina

Item she'd grab
from the kitchen if the
house were on fire:
A cast-iron skillet
she received as
a college graduation
gift. "I never use
soap on it. I use water
and reseason it
with a swipe of
oil. Sometimes I
clean it with a potato
and salt."

Favorite
restaurant dish:
Charcuterie. "Ilove
a good variety of
cured meats and
cheeses. That's what
Ilive for."

Career advice:

"I always tell people
if you lead with
your heart and do
what you love to
do, everything else
will follow."

n many Gullah Geechee families, recipes are not written down, and it's not always easy to learn your grandmother's best dishes. "Children weren't really allowed in a Gullah kitchen," says Kardea Brown, who grew up in South Carolina's Lowcountry. So in high school, she started writing down recipes from her great-grandmother,

grandmother, and mother.

After college, she embarked on a career as a social worker, but the kitchen kept calling to her, and the recipes became her culinary gold. She used them when she started catering, and they formed the backbone for Delicious Miss Brown, her Food Network show now in its seventh season. In October, she'll release her first cookbook, The Way Home: A Celebration of Sea Islands Food and Family with over 100 Recipes. Although many of the recipes are twists on Lowcountry Gullah classics, like chicken perloo and crab rice, she tucks in a few sleepers. One is salted Georgia peanut pie, a textural cousin to pecan pie that Brown secured from her mother, Patricia, who got it from a coworker. "Ihave my own version of a pecan pie that I love, but I prefer the peanut pie," Brown says.

That's in part because she loves the flavor of molasses, which costars in the recipe along with peanut butter and a cup and a half of honey-roasted peanuts. The marriage of molasses and peanuts brings to mind the taste of Cracker Jack. "It reminds me of the old Sugar Daddy with the yellow-and-red wrapper," Brown says. "It has those same flavors and same notes."

Cooks who prefer a less pronounced molasses flavor can mix in cane or corn syrup, as long as the volume of liquid sugar equals a third of a cup. And for those who want a little more crunch and heft, be extra generous with the peanuts. The addition of a good spoonful of vanilla-scented whipped cream is essential.

The filling is a snap to mix up. And though a buttery homemade crust will elevate the pie, Brown has no problem using a store-bought shell, a shortcut that's especially welcome during busy holidays. The Brown family Thanksgiving dessert table always includes sweet potato cornbread (essentially a layer of sweet potato pie filling with cornbread batter baked on the top) and peach cobbler (though it's not in season then, her mom loves it). And of course, there are pies. Her grandmother Josephine, who is from Wadmalaw Island outside Charleston, makes what she calls "an insane amount" of sweet potato pie for their large family. But there is always room for peanut pie.

"It's a lovely surprise to add to your holiday dessert table," Brown says, "because most people don't expect to see it."



Salted Georgia Peanut Pie

Yield: 8 servings

INGREDIENTS

For the pie: 1 (9-inch) deep-dish frozen pie shell, thawed 11/2 cups honeyroasted peanuts I cup packed light brown sugar 3 eggs, lightly beaten 1/2 cup molasses 1/4 cup chunky peanut butter 4 tbsp. (1/2 stick) salted or unsalted butter, melted I tsp. vanilla 1/4 tsp. kosher salt or flaked sea salt

For the whipped cream:
Icupheavy whipping cream
4 cup confectioners' sugar Seeds from 1/2 vanilla bean

PREPARATION

For the pie: Preheat oven to 350°F. Place pie shell on a baking sheet. Spread peanuts in the bottom of the shell. In a large bowl, combine brown sugar, eggs, molasses, peanut butter, butter, vanilla, and salt. Whisk until completely combined. Pour the filling gently into the pie shell on top of the nuts.

Bake until the filling is set and the pie is puffed and golden brown, 45 to 50 minutes. Start checking the crust after about 30 minutes, and cover with foil if the crust starts to become too dark. Remove from oven and transfer to a wire rack. Let cool completely, about 2 hours.

For the whipped cream:
While the pie is cooling, in a medium bowl beat cream, confectioners' sugar, and vanilla seeds to soft peaks. Refrigerate until ready to serve with slices of cooled pie.

DRINKS

Fine and Brandy

A WARMING APPLE SPIRIT ACCENTS A NEW ORLEANS DARLING

By Wayne Curtis



eal Bodenheimer is a former history major, an entrepreneur, and a lifelong New Orleanian—his great-grandfather moved to the city at the turn of the last century. All those facts converge in late October with the publication of Cure: New Orleans Drinks and How to Mix 'Em, a lavish cocktail book Bodenheimer coauthored with

the food and drink writer Emily Timberlake.

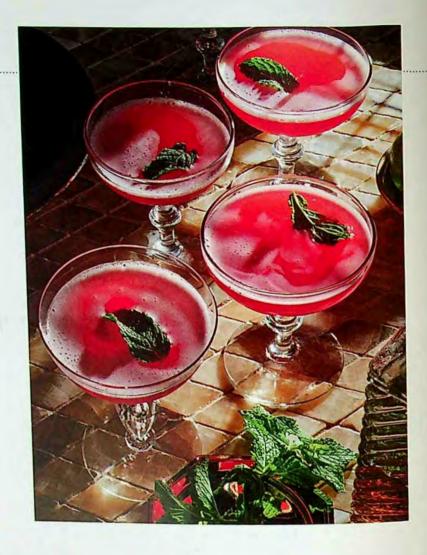
The tome features dozens of thirst-provoking recipes, layered with essays that explore the history and drinking culture of New Orleans, along with the stories behind iconic drinks. One could make a convincing argument that New Orleans is the historic drinking capital of the known world, making Cure essential reading for anyone who understands that cocktails are more than the sum of their ingredients.

"We wanted to write something about New Orleans in a way that people a hundred years from now could understand our contemporary cocktail culture," Bodenheimer says. "It was important for me to get this down—this is what was happening at this time, and this is how we got here."

Bodenheimer named the book after his flagship bar, which opened in 2009. The subtitle nods to a 1937 book by Stanley Clisby Arthur called Famous New Orleans Drinks and How to Mix 'Em. This is wholly appropriate, as the older book in part served as a blueprint for the New Orleans cocktail revival of recent years—for which Bodenheimer acted as lead architect.

After opening Cure, which won the James Beard Award for outstanding bar program in 2018, he and his partners launched Cane & Table (a rum-focused tropical bar) and Peychaud's (classic cocktails), both in the French Quarter, along with Vals (agave spirits and Mexican fare) in a reclaimed gas station uptown. He also launched the short-lived and much-lamented Bellocq, a bar with a quirky focus on cobblers and other obscure drinks of the nineteenth century. ("It was so stupid," he says, "but it was also great.")

Putting together the book was a pandemic project-



Union Jack Rose

Yield: 1 cocktail

INGREDIENTS

loz. London dry gin (Tanqueray recommended) loz. Laird & Company's bottled-in-bond apple brandy % oz. fresh lime juice % oz. grenadine 14 drops orange bitters 3 mint leaves

PREPARATION

Place liquid ingredients and 2 mint leaves in an ice-filled shaker. Shake until chilled. Double strain (using a bar strainer for ice and a fine-mesh strainer for leaves) into a coupe glass. Garnish with the remaining mint leaf.

Bodenheimer worked on it nearly daily with Timberlake (who is based in California), sifting through research, reviewing a decade's worth of cocktail recipes, and rendering selected drinks accessible for home bartenders. For a busy bar owner suddenly sidelined, the endeavor became a godsend. "I'm pretty sure it kept me sane," Bodenheimer says.

One of the featured recipes, the Union Jack Rose, originated with an early partner at Cure, Kirk Estopinal (also a New Orleans native). A riff on an apple brandy classic called the Jack Rose, the cocktail includes equal measures of apple brandy and London dry gin (hence the "Union Jack," if you have to ask), along with lime juice, grenadine, and orange bitters. It's considered a "split base" drink—built on two very different spirits-an approach that wasn't common when Cure first opened (though has since become standard at craft bars). "But the mint in the shaker makes the drink," Estopinal says. "I remember some staff were nonbelievers in how a small touch could really alter a drink. So we did a comparison with and without a couple of mint leaves—it was a great moment in understanding subtlety."

Customers, it turned out, also appreciated the nuance—the cocktail became one of Cure's first "runaway hits," Bodenheimer says. And while he appreciates a classic Jack Rose, he puts forth the proposition in his book that the modern variation is "even better than the original." I'm inclined to agree.



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SHARING THE FLAVORS OF HER EGYPTIAN HERITAGE, BAKER SARAH COLE IS WINNING OVER PALATES IN THE STATE'S BLACK BELT REGION

By Jennifer Kornegay

AGE:33 HOME BASE:

Greensboro, Alabama KNOWN FOR: Sarah Cole's Egypt-meets-Alabama dishes propelled her food business, Abadir's, from a pop-up bakery to a new spot in a cottage on the edge of downtown Greensboro, which will serve as a home for her pastries and graband-go meals, dinner events, and classes for the nonprofit she founded, Black Belt Food Project.

Heritage and home: "My momand her family fled religious persecution in Egypt, ending up in Demopolis, Alabama, where she met my dad and where I was raised. When I was growing up, my gedo [granddad], who didn't speak a lot of English, connected with methrough his Egyptian cooking. My mom was proficient in what I call 'rural Egyptian' cooking, creating the foods of her home with ingredients she could get in our little town." Name dropping: "My mom's family name is Abadir, but they changed it when they got to the United States. I've always thought it was beautiful, so I reclaimed it." Perfect union: "Abadir's blends Arabing redients into more familiar packages: dates in my chocolate chip cookies, tahini in my orange-honey rolls, and coriander with strawberries in my cornmeal pound $cake. I grew up enjoying Southern and Egyptian dishes, so playing with the cuisines together feels natural. \\"Go formula to the control of the control of$ the gold: "It's been fun to see people fall in love with these flavors, and kind of surprising, too, that some of my really traditional items, like sfouf, an intensely yellow Lebanese turmeric cake, are the ones people now want the most." $Good \, and \, good \, for \, you: ``l \, put \, emphasis \, on \, nutritionally \, rich \, and \, seasonal \, ingredients. \, Not \, diet \, food. \, But \, natural, \, and \, seasonal \, ingredients \, and \, seasonal \, seasonal \, ingredients \, and \, seasonal \,$ simple, and wholesome, like honey, fruit, and whole-grain flours. Taste matters, but I hope to get others thinking about nourishing their bodies, too." Sweet mission: "I wanted to do more than make food and sell it, so I founded

Black Belt Food Project, a nonprofit focused on education and increased access to good food. We're launching programming like hands-on cooking and nutrition classes. It's not to tell people how or what to eat, but to improve the understanding of what we're consuming and why." On the rise: "Our new space means an expansion of everything I've been doing. Abadir's has been in my heart a long time. It feels really good to see what it's becoming."

Cole in her home kitchen with a fourlayer lavender coriander cake with fig leaf whipped cream.



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eherwan Irani had his first taste of duck while visiting his brother in Australia in 2005. "It was a near religious experience," says the executive chef and co-owner of the Chai Pani Restaurant Group and the spice company Spicewalla. "We went to a hole-in-the-wall Chinese

restaurant known for its crispy duck. I was in awe of the shatteringly crisp skin paired with the unctuous meatiness of the flesh. After I finished, I was eyeing the next table's order so longingly that they offered me some." A few years later, Irani quit his job in sales to open his first restaurant, the James Beard Awardwinning Chai Pani in Asheville, North Carolina, where duck landed on the menu. "I find it more versatile than red meat, and more delicious and forgiving than chicken," he says.

With duck season opening in November across much of the South, it's a great time to refine your cooking technique. (Even if you're purchasing fresh pasture-raised duck, the breasts will be fattier and more succulent in fall and winter.) To balance the fattiness and slight gaminess, Irani likes to pair duck with Asian flavors like soy sauce or plum sauce, or with robust, warming spices inspired by his upbringing in India, such as cinnamon, cardamom, and coriander (see recipe). And the key to a successful pan-cooked breast, he says, is properly scoring and rendering the fat-i.e., melting the fat at a medium to low temperature so it doesn't burn-to achieve perfectly crispy skin and tender meat. "That fat, that glorious fat, helps cook the duck while also rendering out to become a ghee of the gods," he says. "There's a sexiness to duck that's just unmatched by most meats." @

THE CHEF RECOMMENDS:

Spice-Crusted **Duck Breasts in Coconut** Curry Pan Sauce

Yield: 2 servings

For the duck: **INGREDIENTS**

2(8oz.) duck breasts,

skin on (mallard works well) Kosher salt Spice blend: 6 dried red Thai chiles 2 pods green cardamom 1 star anise 11/2-inch stick of cinnamon, broken 2 whole cloves 2 thsp. coriander seeds Itbsp. cumin seeds 1 tsp. fennel seeds 1/2 tsp. poppy seeds 10 whole black peppercorns Coconut oil

PREPARATION

In a large skillet, toast spices on medium-low, stirring and mixing for about 2 to 3 minutes, taking care not to burn. Cool, then blend in a coffee grinder. Mix a few drops of coconut oil into the spice blend until you have a crumbly paste.

Using a sharp knife, score the duck skin diagonally about halfway down through the fat in a crisscross pattern. Season generously with salt. Apply the spice paste liberally to both sides of the breast, working it into scored skin.

Heat a heavy skillet overlow heat and place duck breasts skin side down. Adjust heat to medium-low-the fat should sizzle but not "pop." Once skin is crispy, about 15 minutes, flip breasts. Cook for 2 to 3 more minutes, until internal temperature is 130°F. Let rest on a wire rack while you make the pan sauce.

For the sauce:

INGREDIENTS Itbsp. ginger, grated 1/4 tsp. turmeric powder 1/4 tsp. red chile powder I cup chicken or vegetable stock I cup full-fat canned coconut milk I lime, juiced

PREPARATION

In the same skillet used to cook the breasts, heat a couple of tablespoons of the leftover duck fat over mediumhigh heat. Add ginger, turmeric, and chile powder. Stir for 30 seconds, then deglaze with stock, scraping the bottom to release crispy bits. Once it's simmering, add coconut milk and return to simmer. Reduce to medium-low and cook for 5 to 7 minutes to thicken. Finish with lime juice.

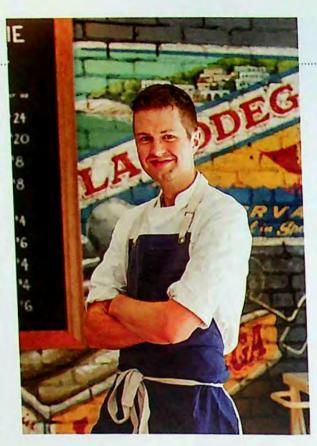
To serve: Cut breasts into 1/4-inch diagonal slices. Serve over basmati rice with the sauce. Garnish with cilantro.





Fine Jewelry | Vessels of Personal Expression | Symbols of Love & Significance

JUBILEE



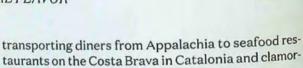




BY JOHN T. EDGE

Spain All Day

THE NEW CAFÉ AND WINE BAR FROM THE DUO BEHIND ASHEVILLE'S RENOWNED CÚRATE DOESN'T SKIMP ON GLOBAL FLAVOR



alk me through the sherries," I say, explaining that I like the dry and nutty stuff but have never successfully navigated the thicket of amontillados and olorosos. I flirt with a Manzanilla before detouring to a white wine made from a grape used to make sherry. Close enough. As manager Tayler Buffington pours a Celler del Roure from Valencia, he talks salinity and how to pronounce the place-names attached to Spanish wines.

"In Spanish, every letter is pronounced the same way regardless of context," he says. "That makes everything easy." What he doesn't say, my wife, Blair, and I learn over four meals in three days at La Bodega by Cúrate in downtown Asheville: Under the spell of this new Spanish restaurant, the latest from Katie Button and Félix Meana, the wife-and-husband team behind the much-lauded Cúrate Bar de Tapas, everything seems to come easy.

Most restaurants focus on time or space travel. Time-travel restaurants depend on nostalgia, promising a moment when life was simpler and food and drink were somehow better. Space-travel restaurants promise to pick you up in one longitude and put you down in another. La Bodega works the latter angle, taurants on the Costa Brava in Catalonia and clamorous vermouth bars in Madrid or Barcelona.

One block off the main drag, tucked in a sort of urban gulch behind the couple's first restaurant, La Bodega feels like a reward for the intrepid. In a heavily touristed city like Asheville, discoveries like this are gold. We enter through La Bodega's streetside market and counter-service café, jammed with mementos from Spanish bars and restaurants, stocked with bottlesof vermouth and jugs of gazpacho and tins of conserved fish. Upstairs, sunlight angles through the casement windows of a dining room dominated by an L-shaped bar. Tables hug rough-hewn walls. Scarred and gouged, they tell the story of renovating an old garage into a new and mod space.

Opposite a host stand fashioned from a tool chest, above a butterscotch-colored banquette trimmed in white piping, hangs an oil portrait of an earnest young Félix. His father, Eduardo, also painted the fishermen in dinghies, rowing out to sea. Arranged in a tight gallery, these eight paintings pay homage to the small Catalonian town of Roses, where Félix grew up, and to Spain, the country he and Katie now interpret.

We begin lunch with montado de atún, which trans-

From left: La Bodega's hamburguesa, with lardo, mushrooms, and caramelized onion on a potato bun; chef de cuisine Matt Brown; tinned seafood and snacks.

lates as tuna cooked and preserved in oil, piled atop fried sourdough smeared with chili mayonnaise, and tossed with pickled green peppers. The tuna tastes luxe and creamy, but the finished dish looks and eats like peasant food. Many of the dishes here play across the palate like sermons on simplicity. Soft-fried anchovies, filleted open, heads still attached as if to prove freshness, arrive naked with a side of green peppercorn mayonnaise and a supreme of lemon. A sunshineyellow open-faced tortilla comes studded with croutons and topped by rounds of squash. Royal Red shrimp, robed in a peekaboo crust, get tucked inside crusty bread cut into pointy wedges.

At dinner, bartenders mix gin and tonics in oversize brandy snifters floated with juniper berries. Stalks of thyme jut from the ice. Laid flat on crisp toast, topped with a squiggle of creamed blue cheese, a dish of piquillo peppers recalls a bas-relief corsage or a stylish brooch. Potato salad, pocked with hunks of confit tuna, gets blanketed with shaved bottarga and planted with knobs of bread. Lemon-pistachio vinaigrette binds a salad of Little Gem lettuce, tangled with shaved zucchini.

If you have to go big, order a burger. Conceived by chef de cuisine Matt Brown and charcuterie program leader Jonathan Pridgen, this burger reads like it was made by chefs who refused to serve a burger, got re-

minded that Americans love burgers, and built a pork and beef burger on their own terms. Bite into a toasted bun that looks and tastes like an everything bagel gone feral and a ribbon of Ibérico lardo spills out. Black and gnarly hunks of caramelized onion follow. Fries come with a bullet of aioli splashed with hot sauce. Cooked until they are impossibly creamy at their cores, they taste, well, normal. Check that: They taste perfect.

When Blair and I first ate at the first Curate in 2011, we fell hard for the pan con tomate, a Catalonian dish of grilled bread smeared with pulped tomatoes. Our server that day told us the restaurant shipped in bread from Spain. At La Bodega, authenticity requires inhouse work. Downstairs, amid the takeaway products, the crew bakes the crisp baguettes on which those shrimp sandwiches depend, as well as empanadas stuffed with that confit tuna we came to love at lunch. Plus, tremendously delicious tortillas españolas-fat disks of potato and egg that, on the prod of a fork, release a rich stream of yolk.

As I walk out the door with one of those tortillas in hand and a baguette tucked under my left arm, Megan Watson, the server for our second lunch, tells Blair that three of her customers from the day before came back for breakfast. At least one, I'm sure, had the good sense to grab a to-go tortilla española for lunch. @

Wine and Dine

Good pours and good grub in West Asheville

Regulars at Leo's House of Thirst, a wine bar in West Asheville, drink rosé from France's Jura region and nibble at green garlic dip on a shaded patio. Inside, beneath a timber-crossed ceiling, couples sip orange wines from Sicily and Friuli and eat steak tartare haloed by matchstick potatoes. Developed by Drew Wallace, a champion of gastropub food and natural wines, Leo's is a low-key oasis that does right by the snacks thirsty people crave.-JTE





Universal Furniture



How a Global Brand Preserves a Carolina Legacy

Crypton carries on the American textile tradition while imbuing every thread with high-performance innovation

There was a time when North Carolina was a world leader in textiles. Thanks to industrial innovations, a plenitude of accessible waterpower, and readily available raw materials, by 1921 the state boasted 341 mills producing \$191 million worth of textiles annually. This booming industry not only ushered in an era of growth but reshaped the landscape into company towns, industrial communities throughout North Carolina's Piedmont and foothills. Places like Cliffside, a hamlet located in southern Rutherford County along the Broad River, known for the largest gingham mill in the South. But the dawn of the twenty-first century, with its globalization and consolidation, nearly erased all of it. The good news now is that some companies are finding a way to rebound.

In 2019, Crypton, a high-performance upholstery fabric company, purchased Cliffside's historic Abercrombie Mill, reviving innovative luxury home fabric production. Today Cliffside is once again a proud leader in the fabric industry thanks to the Crypton Mills at Broad River, where sustainability, well-being, and Americanmade craftsmanship come first.

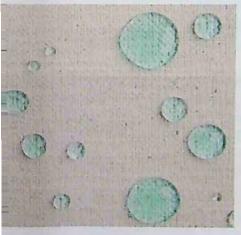
That mission is an extension of Crypton CEO Lance Keziah's belief that companies shouldn't just be makers but positive changemakers, both for communities and the products they prepare. Crypton illustrates this mission in lines such as its first-to-market Crypton Home Performance Recycled Cottons. In keeping with the company's commitment to "think glob-

ally, act locally," the fabrics are designed and woven at the Crypton Mills at Broad River and featured on Universal Furniture products which are also handcrafted in North Carolina. In an era when the fashion industry is responsible for 20 percent of waste globally, Crypton is making a difference by weaving this collection from 50 to 70 percent recycled cotton repurposed from the garment industry. In fact, Crypton's Cliffside crew are pioneers in modern upholstery production. They are the first in the home design sector to incorporate Recover cotton yarns into home fabrics. Made using a closed-loop technology that turns cotton apparel that would otherwise be considered waste into valuable newfiber and ultimately pure cotton yarn, until now this innovation was used almost exclusively in clothing manufacturing. But these aren't just eco-friendly fiber alternatives. Performance Recycled Cottons also feature the company's patented spill repelling, stain-and-odor resisting properties. Thanks to the partnership between the two esteemed North Carolina brands, an industry that was once waning is now growing and advancing the trade for the greater good all while upholding the state's title as the nation's premiere region for furniture.

The design and technology capabilities may have changed since the historic Abercrombie Mill became a textile hub 120 years ago, but the place and the people behind America's preeminent fiber firm remain the same: a small North Carolina community weaving its way into the future.

Find out howyou can incorporate Crypton fabrics into your home at Crypton.com



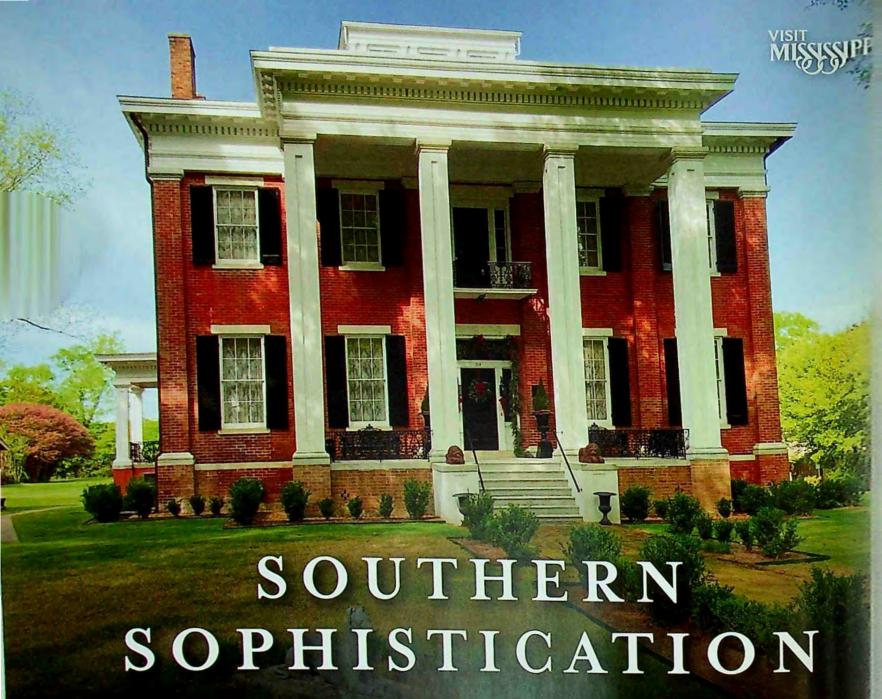


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Uptown Eclectic

PENNY FRANCIS BRINGS A COLORFUL GUMBO OF DESIGN ERAS TO A CENTURY-OLD NEW ORLEANS HOME

By Jenny Adams



n her Uptown shop, Eclectic Home, the New Orleans designer Penny Francis has built a decorator's wonderland, where shoppers can meander through ivory bouclé swivel chairs, poppy-pink tempered-glass end tables, and Moorish throne chairs from Syria. The showroom reflects her design philosophy: a riot of color moderated by a sliver of restraint that renders harmony rather than chaos; a conversation-inducing stew of styles nearly impossible to replicate that has attracted the city's risk-taking tastemakers for twenty-two years. "Sure, everyone loves a big, heavy European antique, but I also wanted midcentury-modern coffee tables and art deco sconces," she says. Above the boutique, Francis's firm guides clients tackling projects ranging from French Quarter manses to the brand-new Four Seasons residences.

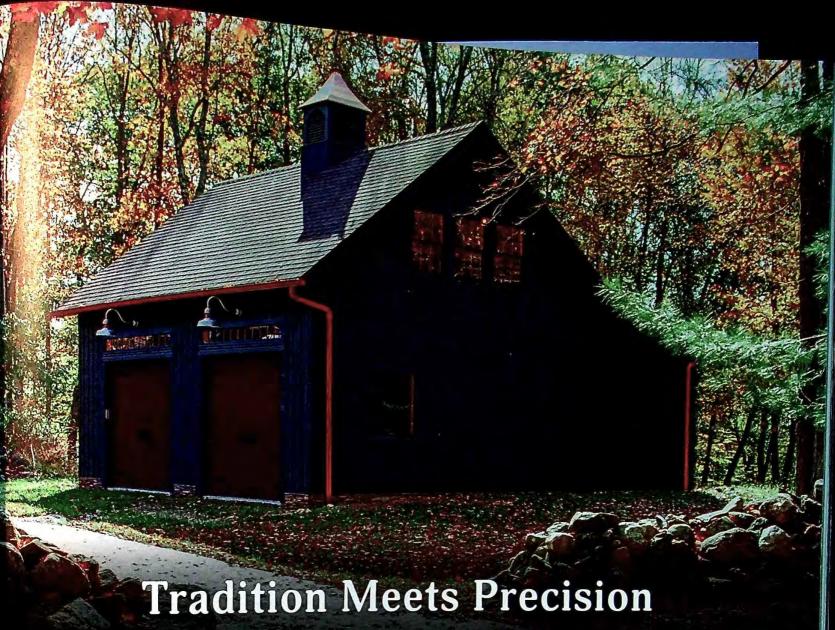
The shop also serves as a laboratory for her own constantly evolving home, where you're as likely to find her moving a sofa as throwing a party. "New Orleans has been home since I was eight years old," Francis says as she sits in her kitchen on a dove-gray velvet high-backed chair. Nearby French doors usher in afternoon light,

Clockwise from above: Penny Francis's art-filled entryway; Francis and her dog Cody on the back porch; the front door; antique silverand-brass tea caddies. Previous page: Original built-in bookshelves in the den.









AUTHENTIC POST & BEAM BARNS





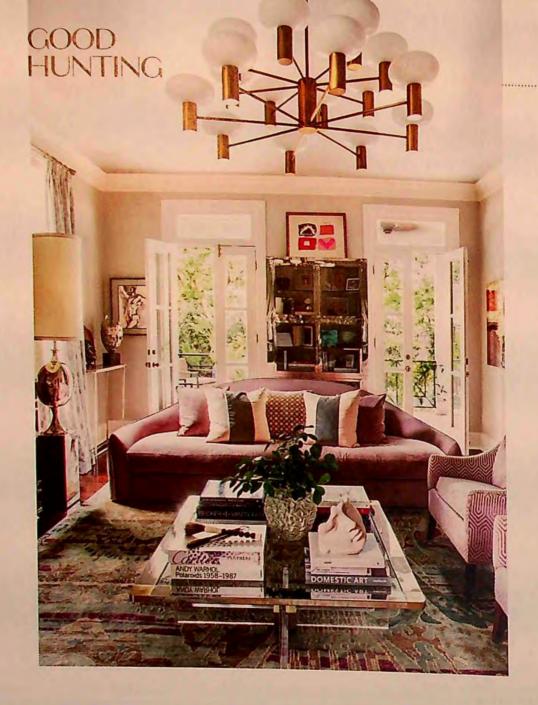




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Featured Photo: 28' x 28' Lenox Carriage Barn







which slices across a wide porch and an electric-blue swimming pool beyond.

"My husband is an avid hunter and gardener. He wanted a yard and a garage," she says. "I laughed. There are no garages in Uptown, but he bet me a thousand dollars he could find one." In 2012, Francis lost that wager when they ran across the 101-year-old, five-thousand-square-foot double just a block off Audubon Park. Inside, however, awaited a challenge fit for a designer: an interior stalled in the eighties, burdened by lowered ceilings and wing walls in the kitchen.

"So many rooms were cut off from others and forced you to backtrack," she says.
"That first look, I thought, what a project."
A year of renovations yielded a three-bedroom, five-bathroom house with a pleasing flow, and luxe additions such as a gymand a petite home theater.

A few historic touches plucked Francis's heartstrings, though, including the living room's commanding bay windows, which she kept and countered with a moment of midcentury romance: a lavender Italian velvet sofa. She repeated that color in Gustavian-style chairs decked in Kravet velvet in the dining room and grass-cloth wallpapers by Phillip Jeffries and Schumacher throughout the house. Her living room, anchored by a 1930s-inspired Arteriors chandelier, exudes contradiction. "I think there's real fun in intentionally mixing materials," she says, smiling down ata1970s coffee table with Lucite legs. Sixfoot Italian lamps with chrome bases and towering shades flank a stunning blacklacquer glass console with silver hardware.

Alessertalent might opt for either bold art or bold furnishings, but Francis knows no fear. "This one is special," she says of the Mississippi artist Kennith Humphrey's The First Date, an abstract nude she's had for decades, now hung on her living room wall. It juxtaposes Francis's favorite lilac hue with intense swaths of red and black. "During Katrina, the water came just below the frame, but we were able to repair the damage."

Every piece in the home bears meaning for Francis, whether it's Depression-era

Clockwise from top: The living room; an abstract portrait by local painter Gavin Jones; an upstairs guest bedroom.

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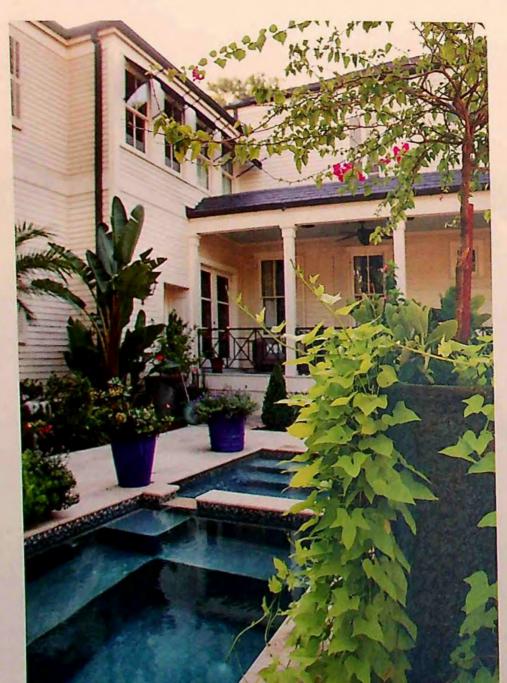
GOOD







 $Clockwise\ from\ above: The\ primary\ bathroom; a\ peek\ into\ the\ den; the\ breakfast\ nook; Francis's\ backyard\ pool, flanked\ by\ planters.$

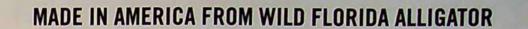


decanters inherited from her grandfather in the dining room or the photographer Clifton Henri's image of a young boy standing on a bike tire in the powder closet. A Jackson Pollock-style Frederick Brown painting dominates her cozy denthe family's favorite hangout—where dark blue walls and original built-in bookshelves evoke an admiral's cabin on a ship. The ceiling draws the eye with another grass-cloth paper, this one mimicking denim.

The upstairs decor is even more personal. Francis and her husband revamped the landing as an office space, removed a bedroom to create a spa-style bathroom and a dreamy walk-in closet, and adorned the walls with works by their daughters, both graduates of the Savannah College of Art and Design.

On the way down, Francis stops on the staircase and points to a sepia photograph of a low-slung building. "I've been a fan of the New Orleans photographer Lee Crum for a long time," she says. "I found this image of an old juke joint called Little Rumboogie. My dad used to love going there." Francis purchased it as a Father's Day present, but her father died before she could give it to him.

"Heloved telling stories of these old New Orleans bars back in the day. It's an homage now," she says. "Although it's almost hard to have it hanging here, I believe art and design should do that. It should make you feel something that deeply."





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The Restless Spirit

BOB DYLAN'S HEAVEN'S DOOR WHISKEY IS A MASTERWORK OF THE MODERN RENAISSANCE MAN

n the 1963 track "Moonshiner," folk icon Bob Dylan croons about going to some hollow and sitting by a still. The lonesome ballad tells the story of a reflective bootlegger assessing his life and love of whiskey. It's a melancholy cover that ends in classic Dylan fashion with a line about how an empty bottle ain't worth a damn. It's one of many songs Dylan sings that refer to what he once called the "amber

intoxicant"—including "Copper Kettle," "Gotta Serve Somebody," and "Blind Willie McTell"—and it would be safe for fans to assume the singer-songwriter enjoys the American spirit. But the fact that the contrarian balladeer long aspired to own his own whiskey label might come as a surprise.

It did to Marc Bushala, CEO of Spirits Investment Partners. He first learned that Dylan was interested in entering the bourbon business when he discovered that the musician had filed a trademark application for a "Bootleg Whiskey" in 2015. "As a lifelong Dylan fan, I was intrigued that he would want to own a brand of any kind, but was excited that he wanted to create a whiskey brand," Bushala says.

Unable to quell his curiosity, a persistent Bushala eventually connected with Jeff Rosen, Dylan's manager of some forty years. Not only did the CEO discover that Dylan had a deep appreciation of whiskey, but that he was also an accomplished visual artist who

Bob Dylan's bespoke metal gates, made in his Black Buffalo Ironworks studio, are displayed on bottles of Heaven's Door Whiskey. painted and created sculptures made from found metal objects collected from farms and scrapyards from across the country. "I was blown away by Dylan's art and thought about how it could be incorporated into bottle designs. It was the perfect melding of art and craft whiskey."

But Bushala knew that the key to success would not be Dylan's global renown: "The strategic imperative was to make exceptional whiskey," Bushala says—a super-premium one that could win top honors in spirit competitions and that would be embraced by whiskeyphiles, and not another celebrity-endorsed spirit brand. This was Dylan's aim as well. "Bob knows whiskey and has a very sophisticated palate," Bushala says.

"He was only interested in creating a collection of unique whiskey expressions, each of which tells its own story."

Heaven's Door must be, first and foremost, all about "the juice." Six years later, and with numerous accolades from competitions including London Spirits 2019 Whiskey & Spirit of the Year and San Francisco World Spirits 2021 Consumer Choice to the product's cred-

it, that vision has become a reality.

Bushala attributes the success of Heaven's Door to several factors, not least of which is the artist behind the project and his vision. Dylan's visual art—his paintings and iron sculptures—adorns the Heaven's Door bottles while his personal palate informs each new expression of Heaven's Door.

"Telling you how good it is is like trying to tickle yourself. It just doesn't work," Dylan said of Heaven's Door on an episode of his popular satellite radio show, Theme Time Radio Hour. The Nobel Prize in Literature winner may not have the words to describe his own straight bourbon, double barrel, straight rye, and limited release lines, but others have sung their praises. Heaven's Door Redbreast Master Blender Edition has been called "nuanced and mature." The straight rye, which spends its final six months in new toasted Frenchoak cigar barrels from Vosges, France, is appreciated for its "herbaceous, spicy, and sharp" flavor. And Heaven's Door Bootleg Series Volume III—a limited release—has been applauded as one of the best bourbons of the twenty-first century.

Beit songs, poems, paintings, or premium craft whiskey, Dylan's restless spirit and relentless perfectionism come through in everything he does.

When asked if there is a favorite Dylan album or song that he likes to listen to when enjoying Heaven's Door, Bushala replies, "Simple Twist of Fate.' I've always loved that song, but now it feels like there is some kismet connection in there."



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From top:

BLIND BAG

There's not a more dunk-proof, mudproof, abuse-proof duck pack out there, and few that work smarter than the Timber Pack by Sitka. The bag can hang from a tree by its integrated strap, complete with a gun hook, or stay dry on the ground due to a beefy waterproof welded rubber bottom. Bonus: The top opens as wide as a gator's mouth, with zippered accessory pockets (\$239; sitkagear.cam).

COFFEEJUG

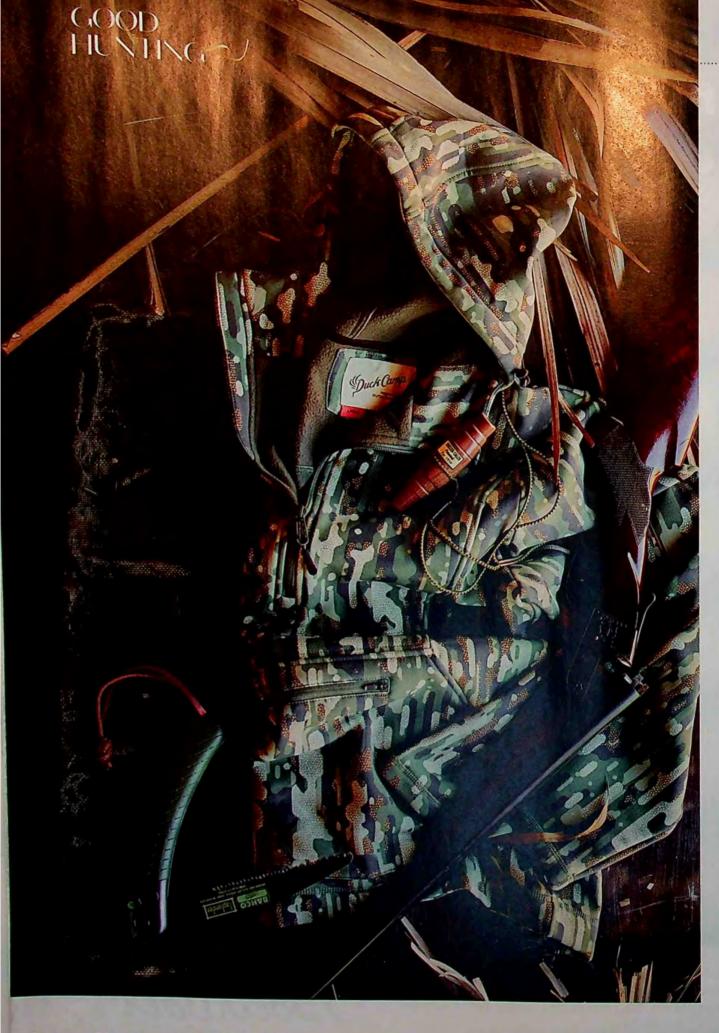
This burly French press BruTrek travel mug is just what the spouse ordered when it comes to silent, easy, no-mess middleof-the-night java making. The unique vessel's design prevents grounds from slipping back into the twenty-four ounces of liquid, which doublewall insulation and a body built as tough as a coal car keep extra hot (\$50; planetary design.com).

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Bourbou



From top:

HOODIE

This do-it-all Duck Camp hoodie, with its fleece-lined tunnel pocket, will ward off a chill on its own, or work perfectly for layering. And it feels as comfy as that ancient college sweatshirt (\$169; duckcamp.com).

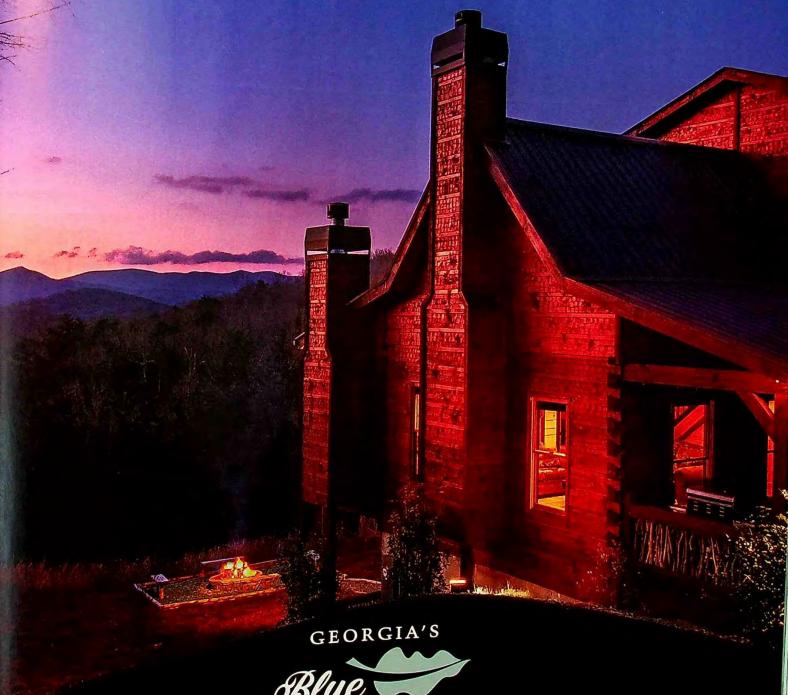
DUCK CALL

The first Yentzen duck call was a black walnut model that came to life in 1959 on a Nederland, Texas, back porch, and went on to gain status as the first double-reed call to win the World Championship of Duck Calling. The classic version still gets made in the Lone Star State and pumps out sweet tones that work in tight timber and open water alike (\$70; sureshotgame calls.com).

CUTTINGTOOL

Built by Bahco, a European brand more than 130 years old, this indispensable, pocket-size folding saw is head and shoulders above the rest. Coated teeth cut in both the push and pull modes to take down brush for a blind, chew through tree limbs for an open shot, and clear your way into a swamp (\$30; thepruner warehouse.com).

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Clockwise from top:

INSULATION TOP

The legendary Jac-Shirt by Filson gets a face-lift in this good-looking version filled with sustainably sourced goose down and outfitted with a snap-front closure, two chest pockets, and two slash pockets lined with flannel. The lightweight nylon shell, treated for water resistance, slides easily under outer layers when the going gets a little colder and wetter (\$295; filson.com).

WADERS

Wearing waders no longer has to test a hunter's fortitude and endurance thanks to advances in comfort like the standout elements built into this Chêne Gear pair. The four-layer water-proof and breathable nylon fabric doesn't bind, and the deep, waterproof zipper makes getting into them a snap (\$1,100; chenegear.com).

WADERPANT

The integrated belt on this cozy wader pant, also by Chêne Gear, is a brilliant touch, the fourway stretch fleece feels decadent, and the built-in stirrups shave precious moments off getting dressed at zero dark thirty (\$230; chenegear.com).





From left:

GUNSLEEVE

This brand-new Wren & Ivy shotgun tote repels muck and water with serious style. Crafted of heavy waxed twill canvas and bridle leather, it features optional personalized embossing and a simple but effective backpack harness for hunters who have their hands full (\$225; wrenandivy.com).

HUNTING JACKET

Retro camo is all the rage, but this spin by Tom Beckbe on the company's Tensaw jacket looks truly timeless. It has a bi-swing back and gusseted underarms, so hunters can move easily, and the shell's waxed shelter cloth turns away wind, rain, snow, and those unexpected splatters when the dog gives a shake (\$495; tombeckbe.com). G

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GOOD HUNTING





From top: Owners Marguerite Johnson (left) and Anna Still, with Tim Vogelaar photographs and an ebonized-oak table by Michael Morrow; alpaca throws; glassware designed by Johnson with Pearl River Glass Studio on a Morrow birch plywood table.



SHOPS

Playing Favorites

SOUTHERN ARTISANS SHINE AT BIRMINGHAM'S STILL JOHNSON

By Jennifer Kornegay

s at a modern art gallery, the polished concrete floors and bone-white walls of the downtown Birmingham shop Still Johnson purposefully keep the focus on the installations-or in this case, a stunning selection of home goods and decor from Southern makers. The abstract shapes of a Natchez, Mississip-

pi, artist's jet-black kinetic mobile, for instance, spin lazily in lavender-perfumed air courtesy of Hazeltine candles, poured in New Orleans. Vintage teak dining chairs gather around a sleek ebonized-oak dining table fashioned by Birmingham furniture maestro Michael Morrow. And drop cloths splashed with Peptopink and highlighter-yellow paint by the Florence, Alabama, artist Cullen Stewart hang across from Nashville photographer Tim Vogelaar's tranquil but powerful black-and-white nature scenes.

Backlit by the plentiful sunshine that streams into the shop, the owners, interior design partners Marguerite Johnson and Anna Still, elaborate on their aesthetic. "It's kinda edgy-classic-traditional, but with something unexpected," Johnson says. "It's this," she continues, her arm gracefully arcing to indicate the handmade Southern furniture, art, and accessories carefully placed around the space, which also contains their studio in the back. "I'd always envisioned a storefront we could fill with the things we love," Still says. "It lets us show potential clients who we are without saying a word."

She and Johnson started their company last year, after establishing an easy rhythm working side by side under another interior designer. "I've always been into art and studied it in college," Still explains, "but Marg is formally trained in interior design. She's so talented, with unlimited creativity, while I think in spreadsheets." Johnson jumps in: "We complement each other." The shop's offerings mirror that yin and yang. In their designs, "we want depth," Johnson says. "You get it mixing eras and styles, and you get it with handmade things; they have a story."

At the beginning, they sourced some of Still Johnson's goods from far-flung locales. But as they mingled items, an epiphany hit. Plates depicting a stylized cracked egg-a dollop of pistachio melding into a moss green in one version; a sky hue bleeding into a vibrant royal blue in another-by Jackson, Mississippi's Pearl River Glass Studiowere holding their own visually next to handblown glassware from Italy. The matte-finished neutrals and asymmetrical shapes of Birmingham's Civil Stoneware felt equally at home cozied up to tableware from a Brooklyn maker. "We loved that these local and regional creatives stand up against some 'bigger'names," Still says. "It was never supposed to be a Southern store, but the items with that authenticity we're passionate about turned out to be Southern. It

organically grew into a place that celebrates them." Johnson finds herself particularly drawn to the rippled forms of the hand-thrown vases by the Farmstead pottery in Oxford, Mississippi, but also to their function. Farmstead acts mainly as a flower farm, "and that informs the design," she says. "They know how flowers sit in a container." Still praises Morrow, the shop's exclusive furniture supplier (aside from antiques). "He's been making custom pieces for our clients, so it felt natural to have him make a line for the store," she says, including a trestle table and dining chairs in a variety of finishes.

And Cullen Stewart owns both of their hearts. "His paintings are raw and a little chaotic," Still says. "This is the edgewe want over that traditional chest. We just can't get enough of him." In mid-October, Still Johnson ishosting a Stewart show. "He's a bit of a recluse," Still says, "but we've had such an amazing response to his work, and we want people to meet him."

Relationships like those, forged through the shop, bring rewards both professional and personal. "Because we've gotten to know these makers, we can collaborate to create items," Still says, such as the platters Johnson recently designed with Pearl River. "There's so much craftsmanship and talent in the South," Still adds. "I just soak that up." G

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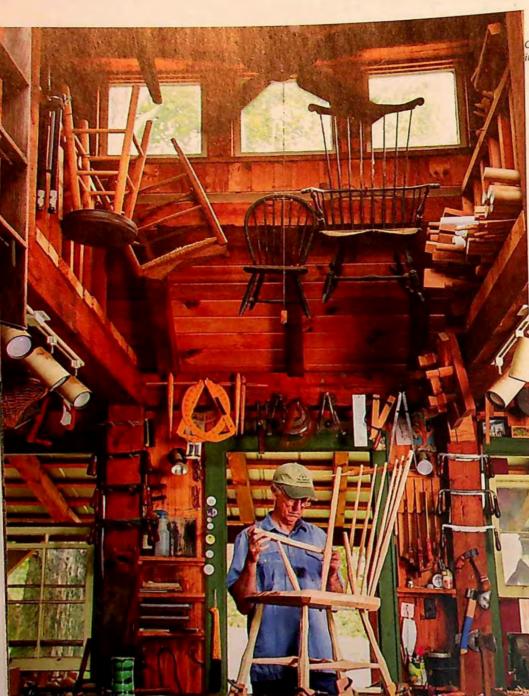
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Curtis Buchanan assembles a "democratic" armchair in his backyard workshop.

n Jonesborough, Tennessee's East Main
Street, past the courthouse, the antique
mart, and the historic little town's single coffee shop, if you listen closely, you
can hear Curtis Buchanan splitting a
maple log outside his backyard workshop. Chances are, pieces of that log will
become one of the elegant handmade
Windsor chairs he turns out there. His creations are
displayed in collections at Monticello, the Tennessee
State Museum, and the governor's mansion, and visitors to his shop come from all over—but that's not why

"Early on, I ran across a drawknife and a shaving horse, and that was the end of all other work," says Buchanan, a handyman by nature who, when he was in histwenties, resisted the thought of a nine-to-five. He stumbled upon chair making, and, under the tutelage of the renowned Vermont woodworker Dave Sawyer, began perfecting his craft. "The tools drew me to it, and it's still the tools that keep me here." Aside from a lathe and a band saw, nothing in his workshop plugs in. Nothing is so dangerous that his five-year-old grandson or neighborhood kids can't visit. Nothing buzzes or whirs too loudly.

he does it. For Buchanan, it's all about the tools.

"The sound of the motors makes you want to go faster," Buchanan says. His voice, like much else about the sixty-nine-year-old craftsman, is ebullient and unrushed. "I like the sound of the hand tools. They set a pace." He ditched his radio in the early nineties. Years ago, when his now son-in-law accidentally cut his workshop's telephone line while digging for a raspberry trellis in the garden, Buchanan thanked him. "It's the quiet, but also the other sounds I get to hear because of the quiet: the birds, the starter on the mail truck, the courthouse clock."

Every morning, Buchanan ambles along the gravel path to his sixteen-by-twenty-foot timber-framework-shop, past overflowing flower beds and prolific vegetable patches, through a wisteria-draped arbor where a mocking bird has been known to nest. Most days, he keeps the doors open to let the sounds and sunlight pour through. In the fall and winter, he runs the woodstove as wind and snow blow outside. His workbench and adjacent tool cabinet sit at the center of the room, with old chairs and stools dangling from above. "If I couldn't make these chairs with these simple tools, I would make something else," he says. In fact, every morning, he warms up by whittling a spoon.

MADE IN THE SOUTH

House of Windsors

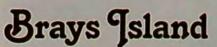
TAKE A LOAD OFF ON A TENNESSEE ORIGINAL

By Caroline Sanders Clements

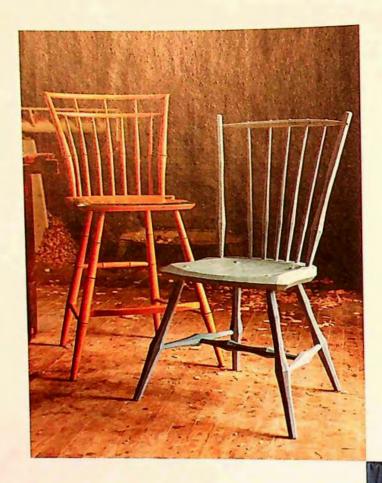


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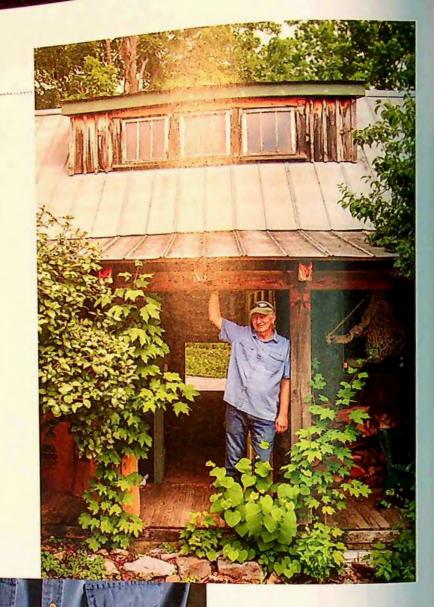


GOOD



But it is the chairs that these humble tools make best, so it's chairs Buchanan continues to produce. He's crafted rockers, settees, side chairs, and barstools. Lately, he's been obsessed with what he calls democratic chairs, a sleeker model that requires just a few hand tools. His bread and butter over the course of his career, though, has been the traditional Windsor chair. A sentiment from the twentieth-century furniture historian Wallace Nutting about the classic design, created in England and refined in colonial America, mirrors Buchanan's ethos: "A Windsorchair, even to a person who does not know it by name, is perhaps more suggestive of pleasant reflections than any otherarticle of furniture," Nutting wrote. "No other style of furniture has been so persistent and kept its quiet place while other styles came and went."

Buchanan's process relies on green woodworking, which means that rather than starting from dry boards, he works pliable logs sourced from nearby sawmills. "I live in one of the most diverse temperate forests in the world, so I have access to everything I need right here," he says. Since he paints his chairs, he chooses his wood for its nonaesthetic qualities such as high tensile strength, light weight, and tight grain. A single chair represents a walk through a Southern Appalachian forest: He uses hard sugar maple for the legs; ring-







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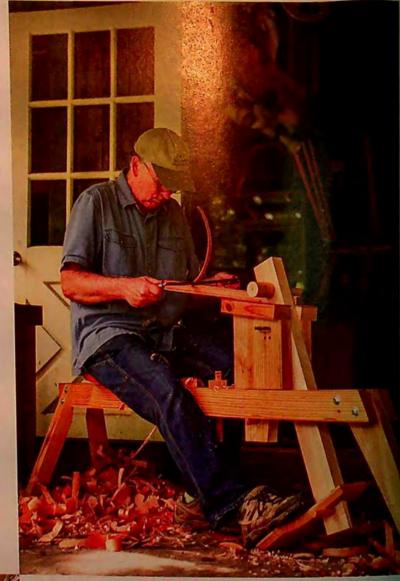
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porous hardwood such as oak, hickory, or ash transforms into the back and spindles; malleable eastern white pine forms the seat.

After splitting the logs, Buchanan shaves the chairback with his drawknife before placing it and the spindles in a steam box (a plywood box shaped like a "snake coffin" attached to a wallpaper steamer) to make them even more compliant. Then, after they're bent, they go into a homemade kiln powered by 100-watt light bulbs. Once they're dry, he shapes them again with a spokeshave, then starts on the legs, which he turns on his lathe and dries. For the seat, he starts with a single board, flattening it with a hand plane and scooping into it with his adze, scorp, and travisher, sharp carving tools with names much more intimidating than the objects themselves. He fastens each piece by drilling holes with a brace and auger bit, leveraging the moisture in the wood so that some parts expand while holes shrink, cementing the pieces into place. A few coats of milk paint, a rubdown with steel wool, and a top layer of shellac finish the job.

For years, Buchanan had a two-year backlog of orders and cranked out at least a chair a week. He appreciated the business, but he's glad those times are over. Nowadays, he's ceased commissions and only sells the chairs he happens to be making, along with the carefully devised plans for how to build each type of chair, plus the spoons he sculpts each morning.

His goal, though, remains unchanged. He recalls a moment, years ago, when he had to decide on what path his career would take. "I asked myself: What did you want in 1983 when you were obsessed with these chairs? I wanted a little shop in the backyard where I could make enough for the family. Then I asked: Is that what you still want?" he says. "The answer is still yes."









Left to right, from above: Buchanan shaving a chair spindle with a draw-knife on a shaving horse; some of the spoons the artisan carves each morning; turning patterns and accessories for the lathe; at work on a spoon.



Find Your Place

FROM THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS TO THE SOUTH'S GREATEST COASTLINES, YOUR SANCTUARY AWAITS

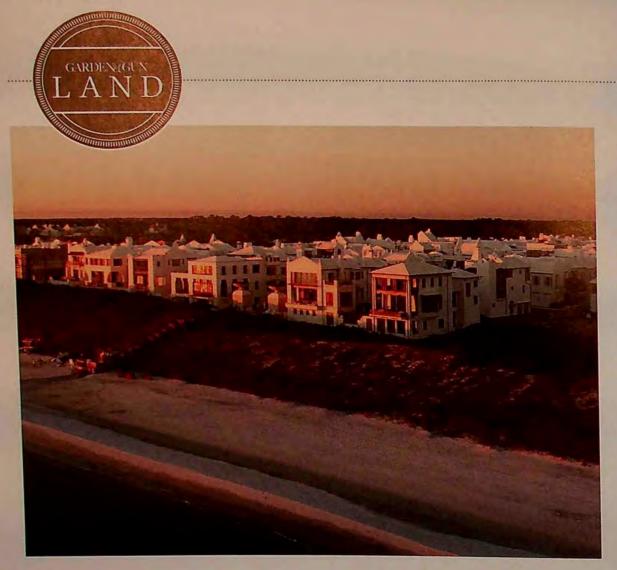
Finding an authentic sense of place is at the heart of Garden & Gun Land. It is our belief that the best stories begin in the places we hold dear—locations where nature informs our day, be it via the urge to fly fish when a cool breeze blows in off the Great Smoky Mountains or the impulse to cancel plans for a day on the water. In this special section, we take you on a tour of three properties that typify this ideal, found in some of the most coveted locales in the South.

Ready to find your new home?

"G&G Land is where you'll discover properties that exist in harmony with the natural world, offering buyers something truly special: the chance to establish a home that respects the land."

—Rebecca W. Darwin

Garden & Gun cofounder and CEO



Get Back to Nature at Alys Beach

COME HOME TO A GULF COAST GETAWAY THAT'S A WORLD APART

or those who wantit all, come to Alys Beach.
Here in this pristine town on Florida's
Gulf shore, a best-of-all-worlds lifestyle is
available, one that includes coastline and
forest, exquisite nature and incomparable architecture, protected privacy and a
creative community for public life. A case

study in bold architectural design, Alys Beach seamlessly joins Bermudan whitewashed cottages with Moroccaninspired minarets and Spanish-style alleys and courtyards to present an otherworldly haven along the dramatic Scenic Highway 30A. The snowy white masonry contrasts against spotless sky and sapphire seas, defusing the Florida heat in turn. That's intentional. Duany Plater-Zyberk (now DPZ CoDesign) created the New Urbanist master plan for Alys Beach, with town architects Marieanne Khoury-Vogt

and Erik Vogt governing the code of standards designed to create a commonality of architecture. The result is a pedestrianscale Gulf front oasis where sharing in community with family and neighbors is central to life.

As Alys Beach continues to grow strategically and intentionally, the next phase of development lies at the north end of the property, nestled near the expansive nature preserve. Known as Phase 4, or the GG Block, this group of homes will offer residents a secluded woodland space with a coastal country aesthetic, a restful retreat with plenty of shade, along with all of the amenities the community is known for. Alys Beach's signature streetscapes and Mediter-

ranean mystique continue in the new addition, characterized by white garden walls that give way to landscaped courtyards and gardens but offer residents a different point of view by hugging the pristine longleaf pine forest encompassing twenty acres of protected land. Just a short walk from the beach, this quiet, greenery-filled space is the ideal spot to take a contemplative walk or just to admire the coastal forest.

In the Phase 4 development, The Silva amenityacts as "the trailhead to the Nature Preserve" in the way that the Beach Club acts as the "gateway to the beach," as noted by Phase 4 architect Tim Slattery of Hart Howerton. The Silva features a central event lawn, pool, covered terrace, and an enclosed pavilion all designed to honor the abundantlandscape. The invitation to live outdoors is on full display. Common spaces are meant to be shared, and an appreciation of the natural world is evident in every aspect of Alys Beach design. This is most clear in the property's nature trail. In order to protect the delicate ecosystem below, its boardwalk was constructed from above without heavy equipment on the ground. Here respect is paid to residents and wildlife alike.

It's this win-win approach that attracts home-

Clockwise from above; Gulf Coast view; the pool view from a custom Gulf front home; an elevated wooden boardwalk winds through the nature preserve; the property's Phase 4 development.

owners to this Northwest Florida paradise. For all the serenity of the sophisticated development, nearby the bustling Town Center offers a robust shopping district in keeping with the New Urbanist intention of authentic placemaking. Charming boutiques and a thriving food scene provide residents with a space to share each other's company before retreating to the calm of their elegant beach community. The retail experiences are available to both residents and guests alike and bring shopping, entertainment, and dining within easy walking distance.

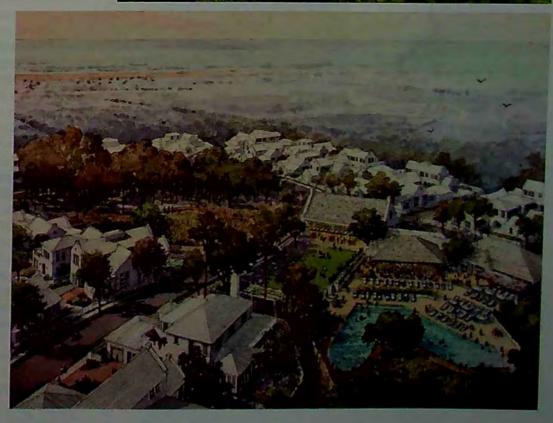
Given the allure, it's no wonder Alys Beach continues to grow. For those looking for their own Gulf Coast escape, good news: Opportunities to purchase continue to come to market, including condominiums, brownstone-style homes, and single family homes that are in planning for the area adjacent to the homeownerexclusive Beach Club and Beach Plaza. This new district of luxury residential condominiums and detached residences are designed by the teams at Hart Howerton, Khoury Vogt Architects and Merrill, Pastor & Colgan Architects, and will place residents within close proximity to the Gulf of Mexico as well as provide access to the unforgettable views afforded by the owner-exclusive Beach Club. The unique architecture carries on Alys Beach's signature seaside aesthetic with spacious floor plans, gracious interior design, and expansive views.

There's still plenty of property to be developed as well, whether buyers are interested in a custom abode or a Somerset Homes plan in this growing community. For those without the time to go through the design process of overseeing a new build-or who just want to live in this brilliant coastal town as soon as possible-the Somerset Homes program provides the solution. Streamlined, efficient, and built close to all of Alys Beach's amenities, including Caliza Pool, ZUMA Wellness Center, the Amphitheatre, and Town Center, the program lets new residents begin their Alys Beach life swiftly and smoothly. All the better to start enjoying the unique duality of the property. Lively community and serene seclusion. Modern architecture and oldworld charm. Coastal guietude and vibrant forest space. At Alys Beach, you really can have it all.

Plan your permanent home in Alys Beach by visiting AlysBeach.com









Casting for a Cashiers Abode

FOR ANGLERS. THERE'S NO BETTER HOME THAN NORTH CAROLINA'S CASHIERS-HIGHLANDS PLATEAU

ince the 1800s, well-heeled travelers have sought refuge in the cooler climate of Cashiers, North Carolina. For those in the know, the peaceful mountain town, which sits at almost four thousand feet above sea level, is one of the country's capitals for outdoor recreation, namely fly fishing.

With some of the most idyllic fishing in the Great Smoky Mountains, not to mention waterfall-filled streams chock-full of native brook trout and wild rainbow trout, Cashiers is home to a community of anglers eager to share their knowledge of this special landscape.

For those casting for a home that encourages the "gone fishing" way of life, McKee Properties' reputation for finding anglers the perfect home is unparalleled. Nearly half a century of luxury real estate expertise in Western North Carolina allows McKee Properties to attract buyers shopping for everything from low-acreage bucolic cottages to ridgetop estates with dramatic long-range mountain views. The brokers represent a variety of communities and provide a rare opportunity for future residents to find a place that immediately feels like home.

"While it is our job to help buyers explore the region and find the property that is a good fit for them, I think an overlooked aspect of what we do is that we get to introduce people to others and help them get immersed in the lifestyle they love," says Beth Townsend, McKee Properties co-owner and broker. "We're not just introducing people to the area, but to each other. We know who else is interested in fishing, painting, or the food scene."

The real estate team knows people like renowned trout-fishing guide Ben Elmer, who grew up in the region. The Brookings Anglers shop expert fishes around the world, but says the variety of outdoor recreation activities in the Cashiers-Highlands Plateau is why it's such an attractive place to live.

"It's a neat area as far as fly fishing goes," Elmer says. "Living here we have access to so many different outdoor landscapes, so many different terrains and nat-

ural features—that's a big draw for people." In fact, Brookings Anglers is located fifteen minutes from the Chattooga River headwaters.

"This morning I fished for brook trout in a small stream at the headwaters of the Whitewater River," Elmer says. "If I wanted to, this afternoon I could float on the Little Tennessee River, which is about forty-five minutes away, and catch some good-sized small mouth bass."

Elmer is particularly fond of the brown, brook, and rainbow trout found in the area. "With a little bit of hiking, you can get into some really untouched water," Elmer says. "Even during the busy months, you can find sections of river where you have a place to yourself. Scenery-wise, it's gorgeous year-round, but it's exceptional around here when the wildflowers are blooming."

The agents at McKee Properties use their deep knowledge of this landscape to help their clients craft a home that fosters an outstanding living experience. Whether the goal is to find a place with breathtaking mountain views, or a home within easy access to some of the best fly fishing on the East Coast, the company's premier properties marry the desire for award-winning designs with a sensitivity for the environment. To protect the region's majestic beauty for years to come, the listings that McKee Properties features were developed with sustainability in mind.

"Moderate temperatures and natural beauty are what make Cashiers so remarkable," says

Trout-fishing guide Ben Elmer prepares to cast at Silver Run Reserve. Contact Liz Harris at 828-342-3194 or liz@cashiers .com for more information.

Liz Harris, McKee Properties broker and co-owner. "The weather is fantastic year-round, and the clubs and activities people choose to participate in are often shaped around our stunning landscape—there are rivers, waterfalls, lakes, and mountains. In all my travels, I've yet to experience a place more special than Cashiers. What we have up here on the mountain is hard to find anywhere else. That is a big reason why my family chose to call this place home."

Case in point: Silver Run Reserve. The private community is exclusively marketed by McKee Properties and located near Nantahala National Forest. The headwaters for Silver Run Falls wind through this property, and Silver Run Reserve also features three spring-fed lakes that make spending the day on the water a popular pastime. The property contains large estate lots and beautiful new cottages along with indoor and outdoor amenities. Whether residents wish to walk among the mountain laurel and catawbarhododendron or simply do some bird-watching, there's something for everyone searching for that deeper connection to nature.

Equally appealing is the 1,250-acre Snowbird community. Designed with nature enthusiasts in mind, the gated neighborhood is ideal for environmentally aware anglers. The mountain setting is a fishing haven with pristine creeks loaded with native trout. And covenants designed to prevent subdividing less than twenty-acre parcels ensure residents can explore the many waterfalls and creeks amid Snowbird's meadows and forests safe in the knowledge that their unmatched beauty will be preserved for generations to come. In addition, 360-degree mountain views make the community a true natural wonder and an enviable address in the coveted Cashiers-Highlands Plateau.

But beyond world-class vistas in planned communities, what you'll find on every property McKee offers is a sanctuary setting where homeowners can find unparalleled peace.

"A great feature of this area is the abundance of open space and privacy," Harris says. "We work hard to preserve that unique feeling. As the mountain region becomes more developed, we strive to represent sellers that want to preserve this special area for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations."

No matter what future residents are searching for—tranquility, charm, or a trout fishing haven—McKee Properties has an ideal mountain home in the Cashiers-Highlands Plateau to make living here a memorable experience.

Find your mountain haven at McKeeProperties.com













CHATTOOGA CLUB

Exceptional estate home in this lovely amenitized community, featuring beautiful finishes and gorgeous mountain views.

\$5,950,000 Liz Harris 828-342-3194 liz@cashiers.com

SILVER SLIP FALLS

Uninterrupted views of Whiteside and Devils Courthouse make this tucked away abode special.

\$3,950,000

Sandy Barrow & John Barrow 828-506-9356 john@cashiers.com

HIGH HAMPTON

This contemporary-ranch estate sits on Wade Road with epic views of the iconic Rock and Chimneytop mountains.

\$3,500,000

Beth Townsend 828-421-6193 beth@cashiers.com

FALCON RIDGE

With views of Jocassee, Keowee and Hartwell lakes, this home offers countless opportunities for future residents.

\$1,595,000

Wayne Monday 828-508-8661 wayne@cashiers.com

HOLLY BERRY ESTATES

Enjoy a mountain cabin with all the luxuries of modern living in this Holly Berry retreat.

\$1,200,000

Maggie Elmer 803-493-5734 maggie@cashiers.com

SNOWBIRD

Set amidst the Snowbird neighborhood, this mountain esoape is located in all of the area's natural beauty.

\$1,000,000

Beth Townsend 828-421-6193 beth@cashiers.com



A Restorative Riverfront Refuge

KIAWAH RIVER'S AMENITIES PROVIDE A CHANCE TO UNPLUG, UNWIND, AND ENJOY THE LOWCOUNTRY'S NATURAL BEAUTY

arlier this year, when Maggie and George
Bullwinkel went in search of a property
that would serve as their romantic escape,
the couple knew they wanted to stay in the
South Carolina Lowcountry. "We were
looking for an intimate little spot where we
could spend some time together," George
explains. "We wanted a tranquil space that allowed us to
get away from the bustle of downtown Charleston but also
allowed us to have a little fun."

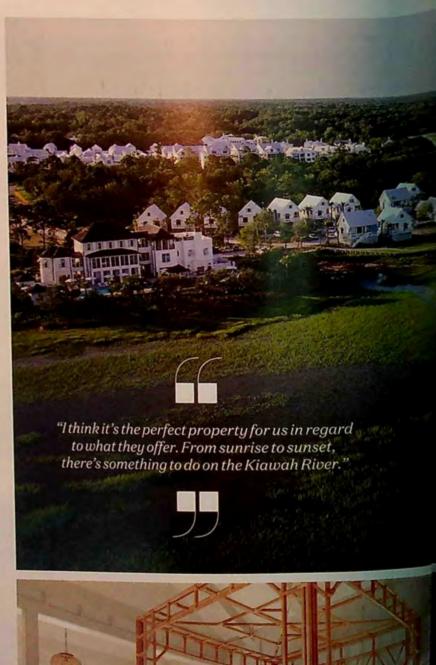
George, a lawyer, grew up in the region, near Mount Pleasant, and the pair decided to raise their children (ages four to eleven) there.

"We love where we live," he adds. "We love the salt water and marsh views and didn't want to stray too far from that. We wanted somewhere close by that had an ambience that made us feel we were a world away from the hectic nature of city life." The couple longed for a place that would allow them to relax near the water but also featured world-class amenities that would leave them feeling pampered and rejuvenated.

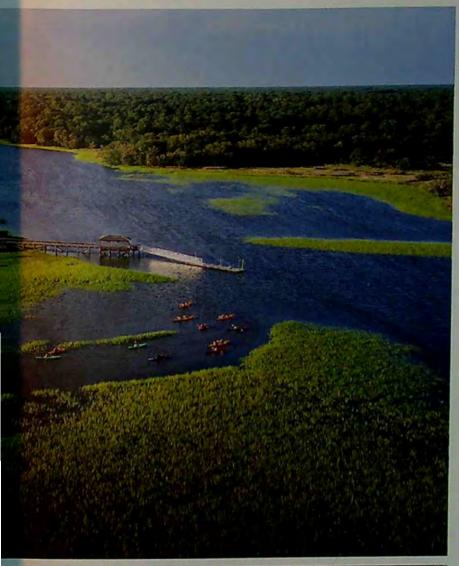
Their search led them to Kiawah River, a vibrant master-planned residential community that intentionally merges thoughtful planning with the heritage of the Sea Islands. Just twenty miles from Charleston, the two-thousand-acre property on Johns Island uses forward-thinking design to enhance its residents' strong connections to nature. With trails that wind through forests and along waterways as well as twenty miles of waterfront views along the Stono and Kiawah Rivers, this rich land-scape is known for its diversity of flora and fauna, as well as abundant produce harvested from its dark, fertile soil.

George is an avid fisherman, and a multitude of places to fish—ponds, tidal creeks, rivers, salt marshes, and open ocean—is one of the features that captured George's heart and signaled that Kiawah River could be a special place.

Clockwise from above: The Lowcountry landscape is at the heart of life at Kiawah River; nature trails allow residents to travel effortlessly throughout the property; the Bullwinkel's bungalow bedroom.









"The fishing is amazing here," he says. "This was an old rice field, and you can fish right off some of the rice trunks." Redfish, summer flounder, spotted sea trout, pompano, and sheepshead can all be found in the waters around the property.

Some of the Southeast's top designers and architects came together to create custom homes at Kiawah River. The community is made up of bungalows, cottages, and villas, as well as waterfront home sites where buyers can build the retreat of their dreams.

That made for a lot of house options to choose from, but in the end, the pair settled on a simple but elegant turn-key one-bedroom bungalow. It's an intimate space where they can get away and reconnect after a hectic day in the city. In the evenings they sit on their wrap around porch and watch the grass turn from green to gold as the sunset dips over the marsh.

"When it came to buying the place, the folks at Kiawah River were excellent," George says. "They made it easy and allowed us to do multiple walkthroughs. The team made every accommodation that we asked for. We were quickly welcomed into the community, and we started using the amenities, like the state-of-the-art fitness center, right away. I think it's the perfect property for us in regard to what they offer. From sunrise to sunset, there's something to do on the Kiawah River."

When they bring their kids to their bungalow retreat, Kiawah River is a place where their children's curiosity can flourish as they grow. "There are two pools for them to play in," George says. "One has a good wading feature that our youngest can use, and the center has a hot tub for us," he adds with a chuckle. There's also lots of room to explore and learn about all the species that call this remarkable place home. "We like the large active farm here," George says. "We like to visit the Goatery, the on-property artisan goat dairy that specializes in fresh Grade A milk and cheeses, to get fresh eggs, and feed the chickens, goats, and other animals. That's something that the kids don't get to experience living in the city."

The pride in locally grown food, featured in signature dishes at the development's world-class restaurants, is part of Kiawah River's conservation-in-action philosophy. Sustainability is one of the core principles as well. The community was designed with an emphasis on the environment, and over half of the community's acreage will remain open green space. The Bullwinkels understand that the tranquility Kiawah River offers will be around for their children to enjoy as adults.

Having a relaxed space in which to spend time together is why the Bullwinkels ultimately bought a home in Kiawah River. With its undeniable beauty, unpretentious luxury, and spectacular sunsets, it's a perfect backdrop against which George and Maggie can enjoy golden-hued days that are anything but ordinary.

For more information about purchasing your own riverfront refuge, visit KiawahRiver.com

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BY JONATHAN MILES

Pack Mentality

WHY SETTLE FOR ONE DOG WHEN YOU CAN HAVE FIVE?

nthe other end of the line came along silence. I had justasked a friend, a magazine editor in New York, where he thought I could live in or around Manhattan with five dogs. My wife and I were migrating north from Mississippi, and our pack—a Lab, a golden, a pointer, and two mutts—was somehow moving with us. "Canada," he finally replied. "Canada is probably as close as you get." Hiswas a fairly typical response. Nevertheless, I flew

up to scout rentals. This was in 2000, when the magazine industry was up to scoul for the large state of the large state still riusn and pashished of it. At one such party I went pinballing around what seemed like the hell of it. At one such party I went pinballing around what seemed like and everyone where an aspiring New Yorker the room asking anyone and everyone where an aspiring New Yorker the room asking any of the control of the room asking any of the control of the c An editor friend took me by the elbow, suggesting I meet someone.

An equal ment someone.

This someone—I didn't catch her name over the music—was an angular

GARDEN&GUN OCT. / NOV. 2022 99

blond woman who listened patiently while I described my pack and my predicament. "I see lots of people with multiple dogs on Central Park West," she offered. "You should look there." Now it was my turn to vacantly blink. At the time, Central Park West had the city's spendiest real estatepossibly the world's-and those multiple dogs she'd seen had clearly been in the care of pro dog walkers. I quickly excused myself, rolling my eyes as I turned away in search of more helpful company. Moments later that same friend grabbed my elbow again, this time less invitingly, and demanded, "Did you really just walk away from Heidi Klum?"

Oops. But I would do it again, albeit more gracefully, for the very same reason: for the good of the pack. When you become

head of a dog pack-a more accurate term might be curator-you cease thinking or acting like what we'll loosely call a normal human being; that is, a person who claims for his or her life a measure of selfdetermination. No, your life becomes the pack: feeding it, caring for it, training it, herding it, playing with it, making up inane songs about it, and, yes, in the face of dubious realestate advice, somehow housing it. There's a stale dad joke that goes around whenever couples announce they're expecting child number three: Get ready to switch from manto-man to zone defense, har har. Well, there's a corollary

there with dogs. When you go from two dogs to three (or more), you go from dog owner to dog...freak. You become a minority shareholder in your own daily existence.

Myown freak flag has been flapping nonstop for a quarter century now. For that original Mississippi pack, we eventually found an empty old house on a lake northwest of the city. The dogs enjoyed paddling around that lake for several years before living out their days on an upstate farm where rabbits darted across the fields as steadily as a stock ticker. As old age stole them from us, puppies soon appeared to, in essence, keep enough players on the field. When children also appeared, the pack helped raise them. My youngest son, for instance, taught himself political eco-

nomics by observing the pack. The dog burying his bone, he concluded, was a capitalist; the dog sharing his bone was a socialist; and the dog growling and barking at the others in the hopes of them surrendering their bones was obviously a fascist. Not long ago that same son got knocked off a small cliff while trying to capture a runaway coonhound on some river bluffs. I guess he learned something about gravity from that, and also about the variety of bruises the human body can acquire. But something about devotion, too: The coonhound, with a yowl, leaped after him.

Our current configuration is a threepiece combo—a Gordon setter, an English shepherd, and that aforementioned coonhound. I don't know why, in my marriage, the dogs have always had to be assigned to

one of us, as in, YOUR dog just chewed a leg off the Queen Anne chair. Possibly it's because our union was founded, like a canine Brady Bunch, on a merger of dogs, thus imprinting some kind of pattern. I'm not friendly with enough couples with three-plus dogs to know if this custodial quirk is common or a sign of a troubled relationship. But two of the dogs "belong" to my wife-she did pick them out-while the other one, the East Tennessee coonhound mutt, the speckled rescue pup, the knocker of children and the chewer of chair legs, is mine.

He is, admittedly, a bona fide handful. For one thing, every time he opens his fog-

horn mouth, ships change course along the mid-Atlantic coast. But the English shepherd (I'm whispering this so my wife won't hear) is kind of our problem child. Lula's hobby is ripping apart squeaky toys to neutralize their squeaker; her ambition, on the other hand, is to do the same to deliverydrivers. A not-insignificant chunk of my free time has been spent Googling "toughest squeaky toys." I came across one on Amazon guaranteeing invincibility; click. "The Amazon driver," I announced to Lula, "will be coming to morrow with an indestructible squeaky toy." She perked her ears. Based on the next day's events, however, what she heard me say instead was "The Amazon driver is an indestructible squeaky toy."

Owning a pack is more than just owning

adog times three, four, or five. (Above five and I'm just going to assume you're a dogsled racer.) There's an exponent in there somewhere. Taking them all out for a walk becomes an undertaking equivalent to a cattle drive; at the end you will be dusty, exhausted, and in want of a saloon. When one dog hears a bump in the night, the others join in barking and baying until a full canine feedback loop occurs, with none of them sure why they're still barking or why I've come staggering outside in my boxers waving my arms at them at 2:00 a.m. Feeding time requires elaborate diplomacy and mediation; the Gordon setter, who lives for the envy of his peers, likes to finish his meals last so the other dogs can see him with food when they no longer have any. (Yep, he's our capitalist.) Driving them around is like piloting arowdy school bus; if they spot a squirrel, however, then it's like driving a bus of high-school girls past the Beatles in 1964. If, like me, you're loosey-goosey about dogs on the furniture, you may sometimes enter an otherwise unoccupied room to find every seat taken. More than once I have evicted the hundred-pound coonhound from the couch to read, only to have him galumph on top of me and award my face an accommodating slurp.

Do I at times grumble, grouse, bemoan the furred lunacy of my life? Ask my family, or my Amazon driver: I do. But would I have it any other way? Oh God no. That exponent I mentioned applies to the pleasures of a pack, too; it's dog joy, compounded. Whether I'm ready or not, every morning of my life begins with the same unspoken proclamation: Let the wild rumpus start.

Yetamidall the slobber and chaos there is a calm, abiding comfort, too, a kind of interspecies camaraderie that keeps my heart buoyed-Fix-a-Flat for the soul. I don't have to tell you about the airwaves being full of grim headlines. Just the other day came news out of Texas that slashed my heart so badly I had to switch off the radio and pull my truck to the side of the road to get my damn eyes cleared. I'm not as confident, anymore, that everything is going to be okay. But when I watch my pack in the evenings, wrestling and romping in the tall glowy grass, chasing one another through the dwindling copper light, panting, grinning, every now and again glancing my way to make sure I'm watching their madcap show, it feels, for me, like everything might be. @



TAKING
THE PACK
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A WALK IS
EQUIVALENT
TO A CATTLE
DRIVE; AT
THE END
YOU WILL
BE DUSTY,
EXHAUSTED,
AND IN WANT
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Nobody's More Country

BLACK COWBOYS-SOME OF THE ORIGINAL WRANGLERS-GET THEIR DUE AT A STEREOTYPE-BUSTING



ome cowboys come in Hummers instead of on horseback now, but the impetus behind the Black Cowboy Festival remains the same: to honor the Black Western pioneers underrepresented in history and popular culture. For this annual weekend of horsemanship exhibitions

and amateur competitions, thousands of people from hours away come to tiny Rembert, South Carolina, less than an houreast of Columbia.

I learned about the festival the way most folks do, by word of mouth. In 2016, I was covering the Chitlin' Strut in Salley, South Carolina, and I shared a plate of the event's namesake with a man who told me about the celebration, full of country pride and riding contests. He promised the food was always good, and the music even better.

I shouldn't have been surprised that my home state, though far from the Wild West, would have a cowboy culture. Historians estimate that in the years following the Civil War, a quarter of cowboys, and 30 percent of homesteaders, were Black Most of those folks were from the South They spread up and away from the region that had held them in bondage, driving wagons or walking through prairies in search of something better. They haven't so much been erased from the history of westward expansion as never included in the first place. Events like the Black Cow boy Festival aim to change that.

On the last weekend of May (instead of the typical first weekend, a pandemic era change), I wind my way through cornfields to Rembert and Greenfield Farms,

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the sixty-acre property where owners Mark and Sandra Myers hold the event. The car in front of me is from Arkansas. The one behind, Virginia. As we wait to pass through the property gate, only one sign refers to what we all came here to see: a small plywood square that partly reads, BLACK COWBOY, MANOR MYTH.

The Myerses didn't initially set out to answer that question. Sandra's great-great-grandparents lived on the land underneath Greenfield Farms when they were enslaved, and Sandra's father grew up there. In 1991, the Myerses purchased the tract, and in 1997 held a church fundraiser there at which children could learn more about farm animals. As crowds grew year after year, so did the festival, and it soon became a tribute to the grit and determination of the Black cowboy. As I wander the grounds, I spot Mark speaking to a cameraman. "It's about people coming

together, no matter what color," Mark says. He hopes the festival, he adds, "will create a greater interest in equestrians, cowboys, and horsemanship in South Carolina, for the everyday working people."

A lot of those people, myself included, didn't grow up imagining Black cowboys. As I sit in my camp chair at the edge of the event ring, I realize this is the first time that I, at thirty-five, have witnessed someone who looks like me partaking in the daring activities of steer wrestling, calf roping, and barrel racing that I had seen on television during my formative years.

My father loved Westerns. When his family bought a TV in the 1960s, they were all he

watched—Maverick, Wagon Train, Gunsmoke, The Virginian, Rawhide, The Rifleman. Later, on the occasional rainy day he wasn't at the farm or the produce stand, How the West Was Won or The Magnificent Seven would play while he puttered around his garage workshop. To him there was nothing more American than the cowboys and their adventures and, perhaps ironically, watching them became his attempt to escape society's oppressive reality.

As for me, I gravitated to Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman, a semihistorical family

drama set in Colorado Springs that premiered on CBS in 1993. The series included Jonelle Allen as Grace, the first major Black supporting actress in a prime-time Western. She was married to a black-smith named Robert E., played by Henry G. Sanders, and sometimes the story line would hint at the barriers the couple faced as they tried to make a life for themselves as recently emancipated people. But they were given no last names. They were always supporting characters, neverthe heroes.

Still, the show was the closest any of us, old or young, had come to seeing Black people as part of the Western record. A void by design. Enslaved people were mostly forbidden from learning to read and write, and textbooks excluded their stories. Some were made out to simply be legends. (Historians now believe the exploits of Bass Reeves, a formerly enslaved man from

Arkansas who became the first Black deputy U.S. marshal west of the Mississippi River, inspired the Lone Ranger tales.) And sundown towns, Jim Crow laws, and segregationist policies kept many from competing in rodeos. When they did compete, they often weren't scored. If they won the competition, sometimes they were deprived of the cash prize.

Once, locals ran the bull rider Willie Thomas out of town when they found out his race. "The high sheriff escorted me to the Texas line," Thomas, known as the Jackie Robinson of rodeo, once recalled in an interview, "and he told me, don't come back or the Ku Klux Klan would kill me." This isn't ancient history: Thomas died in

2020, and the Bull Riding Hall of Fame only inducted him last year.

Back at the festival, "Buffalo Soldier" by Bob Marley and the Wailers begins to play, and several men in cavalry gear gallop around the ring before lining up in formation. I have, at least, heard of the Buffalo Soldiers, a segregated regiment of Black cavalry and infantry fighters formed in 1866, from history books. To prove themselves worthy of being part of the military—and by extension, citizens—they became complicit in the vilification and genocide

of Indigenous people residing on land the government wanted to colonize. Marley's song links their behavior to the universal fight for survival, recasting the soldiers as a symbol of Black resistance.

Then George Strait's "How'bout Them Cowgirls" blasts, and five flag-carrying women on horses take the soldiers' places. Cowgirls! Preteen, Dr. Quinn-loving Latria would've been thrilled. Images of Black cowgirls are virtually nonexistent in pop culture. To boot, the actions that defined the adventurous West—gambling, drinking, shooting, horse riding—were considered off-limits to the women in my family. When the festival's competition portion ends, I wander to the field where the cowgirls tend to their horses, watching themas they mount up to pose for pictures proudly astride their steeds.

Occasionally, the DJ cuts the music and the announcer shares facts, met with claps and cheers, about a Black pioneer: Nat Love; Bass Reeves; Mary Fields; William "Bill" Pickett, the first Black honoree in the National Rodeo Hall of Fame. But modern trailblazers feature here too, including young Breauna Ousley. In August 2017, the announcer proclaims, Ousley became the first Black English rider on the University of Alabama's team. The crowd whoops as Ousley trots around the ring on a quarter horse named Asher. We sit rapt, marveling at her expert command of the rhythmic motions of her horse and learning more about an equestrian sport some of us have never seen.

Between competition runs and riding exhibitions like Ousley's, the atmosphere lies somewhere between an HBCU college tailgate and a family reunion. The sun is sizzling, but the folks around me practically baskinit: Wearing their Stetsons and Ray-Bans, they scramble to find an open space when the DJ plays "The Git Up" by Blanco Brown for a group line dance. The joy writes another kind of new history. "Please remember to stay hydrated," the event announcer warns with a laugh. "I wanna talk to you, not about you."

Later, some of the cowboys begin to give horseback rides to toddlers. The kids' shrieks of joy carry across the field, where adults wait for the bull-riding competition to begin. The toddlers look up at the cowboys, and the cowboys—with melanin-rich faces and curly black hair—smile back at them.

THIS EVENT

IS THE

FIRST TIME
THAT I, AT
THIRTYFIVE, HAVE
WITNESSED
SOMEONE
WHO LOOKS
LIKE ME
STEER
WRESTLING,
CALF ROPING,
AND BARREL

RACING



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BY VIVIAN HOWARD

Hobby Shopping

ON THE HUNT FOR EXCITING, ADVENTUROUS PASTIMES (WINDEX OPTIONAL)



uch as I had hoped that my cornucopia of raw charisma, coupled with my mild case of celebrity, would be sufficient fuel to elicit dates as a forty-something single in 2022, I have been deeply disappointed to learn that I, too, have to travel down the well-worn but new-to-me path of online dating profiles and the ensuing small talk with strangers and awkward—sometimes awful—scheduled first encoun-

ters. I am also apparently required to have hobbies,

When the dating app asked me to list them, it was a little startling to step back and gaze at the hole in my personality where mentionable hobbies should be. Don't get mewrong: llike to dothings. I'm just not listicle-level proud of all of them. Imagine a Hinge profile that reads, "If I'm not fighting my personal war on aging with lasers, microcurrents, or the full spectrum of LED lights, you'll find me rearranging small items around my house until their new position improves my overall mood. If we like each other, I could do all of this at your house." Or consider swiping right on this one:
"I rescue health "I rescue healthy orchids with dead spikes from office buildings and windows!" and windowsills all over North Carolina. I'd love to save you, too.

See what I mean? My hobbies aren't exactly nectar for romance.

Many nearly Many people consider a love of long walks or bike rides, or ageneral attachment to the outdoors, an integral part of their makeup lenjoy moseying around the yard in the fresh air as much as any body, but not when it is a hound. body, but not when it's hot, cold, windy, wet, rocky, uphill, or humid.
That's alot of file. That's a lot of filters, so claiming I love to get outside on the regular feels like it might mi feels like it might misrepresent me. Plus, my past attempts to develop an alfrescolois.

velopanalfrescoleisure interest have gone nowhere. While I would relish seeing, for instance, an easy way with a game tennishopping of tennis bopping around in my hobby hole, my college experience taught mebetter leise and in my hobby hole, my college experience let of fulfill taught me better. I signed up for a beginners' class, not only to fulfill my final physical education and the signed up for a beginners' class, not only to fulfill my final physical education are important. my final physical education requirement, but also, more impor-



Fall Driving Tours

For a few glorious weeks, autumn crowns the Smoky Mountains with spectacular color. It's a sight well worth traveling to see – especially when you take a few roads less traveled. This year, consider a scenic drive on one of Sevierville's self-guided fall driving tours. Here are four tours to explore on your next visit.

Rocky Flats

Experience one of the least traveled sections of Sevier County with a drive through Jones Cove and Rocky Flats, areas rich in history, tradition, and scenic views. This self-guided driving tour highlights scenic vistas, churches, and cemeteries along the route to the Rocky Flats Community. Enjoy driving through a historic covered bridge and visit a pick-your-own apple orchard.





William Ball Ball

BLUFF MOUNTAIN

Make your way to the top of Bluff Mountain for spectacular views. Along the way, learn about local flora at Burchfiel Grove and Arboretum, understand more about a historic battle that took place on Battle Hill Road, and see the Bluff Mountain Fire Tower. Before or after taking the self-guided tour, enjoy a meal and sightseeing in historic downtown Sevierville.



Traversing the rolling hills and fertile river bottoms where the Knoxville, Sevierville & Eastern Railroad (later called the Smoky Mountain Railroad) once ran, Boyd's Creek is a historic farming community dating back to the American Revolution. On this tour, you'll pass by many historic homes, a See Rock City barn and the Battle of Boyd's Creek Memorial. You'll also have an opportunity to walk through Sev-ierville's Burchfiel Grove and Arboretum.





Wind along quaint country roads, travel past fertile farmland, and be ravel past fertile farmland, and be rewarded with spectacular views of Douglas Lake. Highlights of this driving tour include an art gallery located in a historic home, a Century Farm, picturesque country churches, and Douglas Dam – which was initially built to provide power for the war effort during World War II.





Please remember, some points of interest on these self-guided fall driving tours are private. Please enjoy their history and the view from the comfort of your vehicle.

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tantly, I was certain that learning the sport would make me a better adult in unquantifiable ways. As it turns out, all but one student in Tennis 101 had selected the class because a) they already knew how to play, and b) they wanted an easy A. Guess who that one student was. I had to take the final exam twice-the first time like everybody else, rallying back and forth with a partner; and, after I failed that one, the second time against a wall. I nearly didn't graduate.

Alas, I squandered the opportunity to be able to wax on, on my profile, about a lifelong love and particular talent for cooking, when I took a perfectly good hobby and instead made it my work. But after more than twenty years in professional kitchens, I'm ashamed to say that even the act of eating has lost some of its luster. I know when food is objectively good, and I don't by any means dislike what I do. It's just that if your livelihood depends on something, you want to do it as quickly and as precisely and as smart as you can. As a result, if you were to come over to my house and cook dinner with me, it would feel like that time someone promised to show you how to do something, and then just ripped all the pieces away and did it themselves. And eating in restaurants, which so many today consider a hobby? Well, if comparative studies, in which one measures her own manifestation of craft against everything that's happening directly in front of her, sounds like fun to you, then let's book a table!

It's not lost on me that the exposure my Tennis 101 classmates had to the sport probably came from a family member's own affinity for it. Hobbies, it seems, often get passed down through nurture rather than nature. I know lots of families who break out board games, decks of cards, and thousand-piece puzzles when faced with the question of how to spend time together. I've marveled, wide-mouthed, at the muscle memory apparent in their roll of the dice, their deft shuffle of UNO cards, and the way they wordlessly divide and conquer to organize piles of color-coded puzzle pieces. As a rule, though, the Howards do not play. We don't engage in sports, we don't do make-believe, and we certainly don't bring boxes of things with lots of pieces into the house unless their contents can be eaten or serve some practical work or scholarship-driven purpose.

Yet I have always wanted to be in one of those families and in fact have charted a



IMAGINE SWIPING RIGHT ON A DATING-APP PROFILE THAT READS, "I RESCUE HEALTHY ORCHIDS WITH DEAD SPIKES FROM OFFICE BUILDINGS AND WINDOWSILLS ALL OVER NORTH CAROLINA. I'D LOVE TO SAVE YOU, TOO"



decade-long quest to mold my little nuclear unit into people who play games. Monopoly, Candy Land, backgammon, Clue, all the card games-I own them. I've played most of them personally a few times. I've forced board-game hour on my kids like a chore and attached its successful completion to their allowance. I've started approximately eight monochromatic, meant-to-be-hard puzzles that when assembled would have been worthy of a frame. But a complete finish was never on the table; when it takes weeks to establish the puzzle's perimeter, it proves impossible to keep up with all the little pieces.

Staring into the void of my hobby-less life, I started to ponder what function these ritualized activities serve and why they matter. Aren't hobbies meant to soften the edges when we're stressed? Shouldn't we look forward to getting started on them? Would it not make sense for a smile to magically form on our faces when reveling in them? And, unless they hurt us or someone else, aren't the acts that bring us joy the accessories that make us our best selves? I think so.

To that end and with no expectations for how it will read or how sophisticated or interesting it makes me seem, I've done what I love and rearranged things to make my hobby lobby a serene, secure, accurate representation of me. Now my online dating profile reads:

"I come from a long line of women who meditate. We tap into our best ideas and most profound thoughts while wielding a bottle of Windex in one hand and a dust mop in the other. I find my greatest peace when I see my reflection in the floor following sessions of deep, broom-guided exercise. I water plants, even my outdoor ones, with a little watering can rather than a hose because it takes longer, and the act of itreminds me of my mom, her geraniums, and her own watering can. Although I believe I have the potential to be athletic, the only sport l've really taken to is Ping-Pong. Even though I rarely pick up a paddle these days, an adolescence worth of Saturdays spent battling my own Ping-Pong table's backboard made me pretty hard to beat. I'man INCREDIBLE cook. Yet, as long as they're open to suggestions, I really like it better when people cook for me. And I'm not sure what category it falls into-activity, interest, or obsession-or if I was born with a hunger for it or if it was nurtured into me along the way, but the thing I plan to pursue and hope I'm good at until the day I die, the hobbythat gives and nevertakes, the thing Ilove to do most, is laugh." G

GARDENGGUN

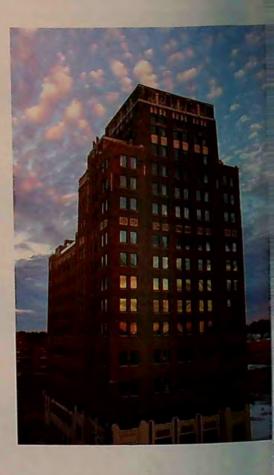
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It's the warm hospitality and the unique experiences.
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Oxford enchants with its deep literary history and passionate Ole Miss fandom.







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From left: Great food is easy

to come by in Greenwood,

home to the Viking Cooking

School; out on the water

in Coastal Mississippi;

Meridian has a robust

architectural legacy.

W

illiam Faulkner. Eudora Welty. William Eggleston. B.B. King. Sam Cooke. Tennessee Williams. Walker Percy. Shelby Foote. Muddy Waters. Tammy Wynette. John Grish-

am. Jimmy Buffett. Charley Pride. Bo Diddley. Jim Hen-

son. And the King—Elvis Presley. With such a star-studded list, there's no denying Mississippi's rich creative legacy or its contribution to the cultural fabric of America and beyond. The

Magnolia State's artistic spirit inspires curiosity and creativity at every turn. It compels natives and visitors alike to wander and explore the regional landscape and local communities that have inspired, nurtured, and celebrated this kind of world-class talent.

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highways, and winding country roads offer a unique slice of Americana, making for an epic Southern road trip you won't soon forget—a pilgrimage where music, art, mouthwatering food, and the great outdoors act as your guide. You don't need a set-in-stone itinerary. In fact, we encourage you to roam. How-

ever, these eight vibrant Mississippi spots—from Oxford's picturesque square near the Tennessee border to the sun-soaked shores of Coastal Mississippi—are the perfect places to begin your Magnolia State adventure.

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The windswept Coastal Mississippi landscape that inspired Walter Anderson's otherworldly watercolors features sixty-six miles of shoreline and twenty-nine miles of white sandy beaches, making the Secret Coast the perfect getaway. The Mississippi Aquarium takes visitors deep into the local ecosystem, tracing the state's aquatic resources up through the wetlands and bayous and into the roaring waters of the mighty Mississippi. There's an abundance of Gulf-totable seafood available at locally owned restaurants, or you can cast your line for one of two hundred catchable species that call these waters home. Strike out on the water?

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Q GREENWOOD

In the heart of the Mississippi Delta, you'll find Greenwood. The town is the final resting place of legendary bluesman Robert Johnson, and for Blues tourists, it's the perfect home base for musical meanderings farther afield. At the Alluvian Hotel and Spa, relax in between jaunts to landmark juke joints at the property's luxury spa or book a hands-on class at the hotel's award-winning Viking Cooking School. Soulful and inviting, Greenwood's culinary culture is built on comfort food classics: fried alligator, tamales, and Mile High Meringue Pie at the iconio Crystal Grill. Nearby, the James Beard Award semifinalist chef Taylor Bowen-Ricketts offers contemporary Delta cuisine at Fan and Johnny's. Come hungry.

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Q COLUMBUS

Columbus has been dubbed the CITY THAT HAS IT ALL, and no matter how diverse the interests of your group, it delivers on its slogan's promise. From sporting opportunities in the beautiful prairie land to fishing on the nearly 9,000-acre Columbus Lake or on the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, outdoor enthusiasts have abundant opportunities to play. Literary nerds can geek out inside the lovingly restored 1875 Victorian home (now museum) where the playwright Tennessee Williams spent his early years. Three National Register of Historic Districts with over 650 properties offer something for history buffs, while architecture aficionados can tour well preserved homes year-round or visit during late March and April for the Columbus, MS Historic Home Tour.

VISITCOLUMBUSMS.ORG



MERIDIAN

Meridian is an easy road trip from Atlanta, Birmingham,
Nashville, and New Orleans, but if you prefer to let someone else
do the driving, Amtrak's famed Crescent line still stops at the
town's historic Union Station twice a day. The renovated Mission
Revival-style structure is just one example of Meridian's robust
and well-preserved architectural legacy. The recently opened
Threefoot Hotel is another example. Drop your bags at the front
desk of this restored art deco stunner and head upstairs for cocktails at the rooftop bar, then explore Meridian's historic downtown.
Other walkable oultural destinations include the Riley Center's
Grand Opera House, where acts like Emmylou Harris and
Trombone Shorty test the theater's unmatched acoustics.

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OXFORD

Home to the University of Mississippi and the frenzy of Ole Miss football as well as the newly crowned College World Series champions, Oxford has also proved fertile ground for artists and authors of all types, including Southern literary legends like William Faulkner. The unquenchable curiosity and pursuit of excellence that nurture the town's burgeoning stable of authors extends to Oxford dining rooms and bars, too. At Bar Muse, co-owner and mixologist Joseph Stinchcomb creates innovative cocktail menus that reference everything from pop culture to Black history. Over at Snackbar, executive chef Vishwesh Bhatt turns out inventive Indian-influenced Southern dishes that earned him a James Beard Award for Best Chef South in 2019.

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TUPELO

Before he was the King of Rock and Roll, Elvis Presley was just a boy from Tupelo. His star power continues to pull thousands of visitors a year to his charming North Mississippi hometown, where you can visit his birthplace and its museum. But even if you've never belted out "Jailhouse Rock," contemporary Tupelo bewitches, surprising travelers with three vibrant shopping districts and an emerging drinking and dining scene. Thirsty visitors can sip their way down the Tupelo Cocktail Trail, where eight local bars and restaurants pour signature Tupelo-inspired drinks, then refuel with a meal at one of Tupelo's 160 restaurants.

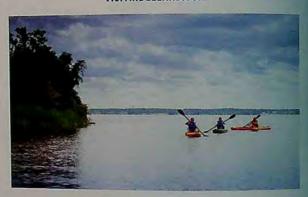
TUPELO.NET



RIDGELAND

Get outside in Ridgeland. Situated just fifteen minutes north of downtown Jackson, this dynamio community sits on the banks of the Barnett Reservoir. Here, pontoons are available for rent along with fishing gear, or you can dip a paddle in the water with the folks at Pearl River Kayaks, who offer self-guided paddles with an ecology focus. For beginner bikers, there's the scenic Chisha Foka Multi-Use Trail, a ten-mile path just off the Natchez Trace Parkway (better suited for more experienced cyclists) that also winds past the state-of-the-art Bill Waller Craft Center, which displays the work of more than four hundred juried artists.

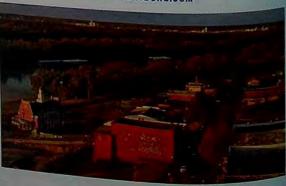
VISITRIDGELAND.COM



VICKSBURG

If you're into U.S. history, add Vicksburg to the top of your travel list. The Vicksburg National Military Park tells the story of one of the Civil War's most pivotal campaigns, but the 1,800-acre park also offers a wealth of hiking, biking, and walking trails. With six museums within walking distance of downtown, history buffs don't have to go far for their next hit. Prefer architecture? Vicksburg delivers on that front, too, with expertly preserved Greek Revival, Italianate, and Victorian homes open to the public. Finally, take time to explore the mighty Mississippi, casting a line with Blue Cat Guide Service or embarking on a kayak expedition with Quapaw Canoe Company.

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FOR SHOREBIRDS, CREATING ART THAT SPEAKS FROM THE HEART, AND MORE

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Chris Crolley >

APOSTLE OF ECOTOURISM

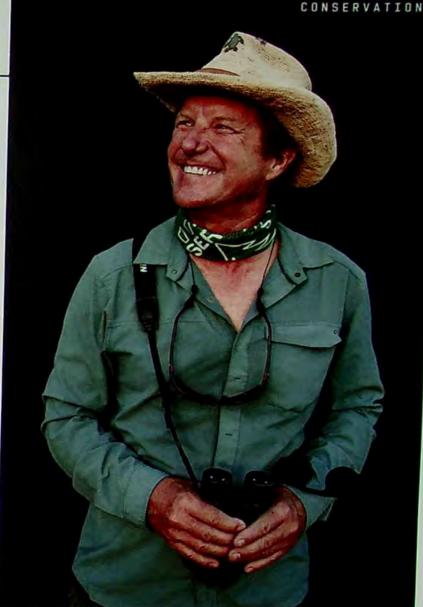
INTRODUCING PEOPLE TO THE BEAUTY OF THE LOWCOUNTRY-AND SAVING CRITICAL SPECIES IN THE PROCESS

AN IDEAL DAY FOR CHRIS CROLLEY INCLUDES SPENDING time on Lowcountry waters-leading kayaking trips through the ACE Basin, stand-up paddleboard excursions on Mount Pleasant's Shem Creek, or ferry rides to Bulls Island's pristine Boneyard Beach. A philosopher by nature, Crolley, when he's not pointing out a roseate spoonbill tucked into spartina or explaining the natural history of an estuary, is contemplating how humans fit into all this. As he sees it, we must save these places, a mission he and his team at Coastal Expeditions have spearheaded since the organization's founding but made official by establishing the Coastal Expeditions Foundation in 2017. "We were spending our lives out here," he says, "so we felt a responsibility to do service here."

That begins with educating others, and the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge-a 66,000-acre medley of barrier islands that harbor migratory birds and sea turtles-makes for a particularly glorious classroom. For thirty years, Coastal Expeditions has helped the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service relocate low-lying loggerhead nests there, record data, and help hatchlings find the ocean. As of August, this year was tracking to become the second busiest for sea turtles in the organization's history, with more than three thousand nests. Turtles take at least two to three decades to reach sexual maturity, so this spike leads researchers to think human aid might just be working.

Crolley also feels passionately about seabirds and shorebirds, species in crisis due to what he calls "coastal squeeze": As ocean levels rise, water covers the sandbars where birds feed, rest, and nest. Homes, schools, grocery stores, and roads now take up the closest higher ground. "They have nowhere to go," Crolley says. So he seeks to teach people the stakes and how to live around the birds. "A black skimmer or a least tern can have the perfect nesting situation on a beach until everyone shows up with their dogs, boats, and fireworks," he says. "The birds leave and the eggs cook in the sun. We're also looking to rebuild and renourish islands. There are five major bird nesting islands in South Carolina, and it's time to pump sand back into them. If I live to be an old man, that's what's happening next for me."

Until then, Crolley will continue guiding volunteers, veterans, third graders, and other adventure seekers, hoping "to turn people on to what is beautiful and real in life," he says. "When you see a dolphin breach beside a boat, or a pelican trace its pinion feather in the water, or when you watch the sun rise over the ocean-that's when you get it."-Caroline Sanders Clements



. 01

Organizations:

Coastal Expeditions and the Coastal Expeditions Foundation

Location:

Around Charleston, South Carolina

Since:

1993

Turtle Power:

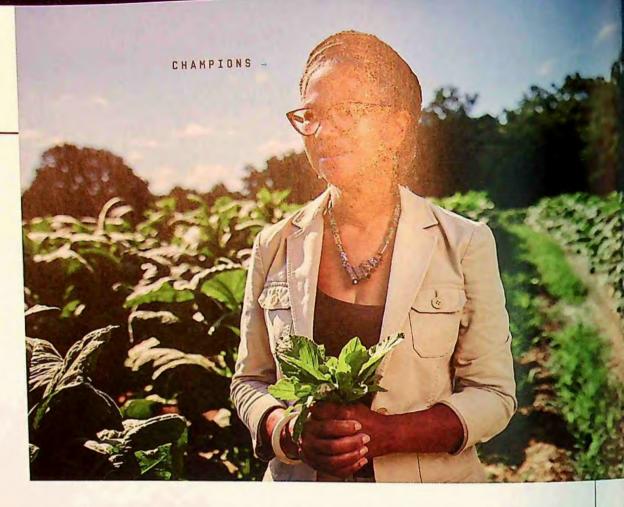
Due to its far eastern location, steep beaches, and conservation efforts that began in 1979, Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge currently hosts more loggerhead sea turtle nests than anywhere north of Cape Canaveral, Florida, and more in a single week than any other Carolina beach does in a year.

Crolley, ready for a day of exploring and guiding. Opposite: At Coastal Expeditions headquarters on Shem Creek.

Savi Horne +

NVNČA

THIS CRUSADER **HELPS KEEP AGRICULTURE SUSTAINABLE FOR BLACK FARMERS**



IN 1983, SAVI HORNE WAS A RUTGERS LAW STUdent when she read about the creation of the Land Loss Prevention Project (LLPP), an initiative to stanch the loss of property and livelihood among Black farmers. "I clipped it, pointed to it, and said, 'One day, I'm going towork here." Then she got married and went to work with farmers in Zimbabwe, where a tiny population of whites still controlled huge tracts of land after independence. And she forgot about the LLPP, until she stood up for a Black farmer at a public meeting in 1997. LLPP staff took notice, and the next year she became the project's director.

Horne now leads the North Carolina-based nonprofit legal services organization, which helps Black farmers—historically stymied by racism in policy and in acquiring loans or property-in such actions as writing wills, incorporating businesses, and managing land or lending disputes with the government, banks, or neighbors. The work has taken her into major policy discussions; she participated in a joint effort, for instance, that resulted in U.S. Department of Agriculture funding to resolve land titles for those who inherit "heirs' property" without the benefit and clarity of a will.

On a throbbingly humid July day, Horne drove north from Durham to a place that exemplifies her mission: Pine Knot Farms in Hurdle Mills. As she visited with organic tobacco pioneer and third-generation farmer Stanley Hughes and his wife, Linda Leach, she beamed athearing that the couple's biggest problem at the moment was the groundhogs eating a swath through Linda's church garden plot. When Horne first met Hughes, a founding LLPP board member, in the late 1990s, that was not the case. Hughes had lost fifty-two acres due to foreclosure. With the 120-plus he had left and LLPP advice, the couple formed business partnerships and built better structures for, among other things, curing the sweet potatoes that have made Hughes a legend and Pine Knot one of the state's rare "century farms," celebrating its 110th anniversary in September.

"Seeing this farm and its transformation has meant everything to me," Horne says. But she knows that more frequent flooding and hurricanes have worsened environmental degradation and threatened even prosperous farmers. Large-scale corporate agriculture and development have reduced the number of Black and low-income landowners, who often lack the resources to fight or bounce back. That's when she and LLPP try to assist. "Land," she says, "is an essential source of our healing, our power, and ultimately our liberation."-Cynthia R. Greenlee

Horne, seen here at North Carolina's Pine Knot Farms, and the LLPP collaborate with the National Black Food and Justice Alliance and its Black Land and Power Coalition.

.02

Organization:

Land Loss Prevention Project

Location:

Durham, North Carolina

Since:

Growing Problem:

The number of Black farmers has been in free fall since the early 1900s. A 2017 U.S. Department of Agriculture census revealed that they make up only 1.7 percent of farmers and own only 0.5 percent of farmland.

Jason Throneberry →

RIVER DOCTOR

HEALING A VITAL
WATERWAY COULD SAVE THE
ENDANGERED ALABAMA
STURGEON AND COUNTLESS
OTHER FISH

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, ALABAMA STURgeon fought their way from the Gulf of Mexico up the Alabama River to breed each spring, the resulting eggs tumbling down hundreds of miles of free-flowing water, developing along the way into tiny sturgeon that would someday make the pilgrimage themselves. Today, two dams built more than five decades ago and sixty miles apart on the Alabama—separating it from its tributary the Cahaba River in the Appalachian foothills above—block that journey, and no Alabama sturgeon have been caught since 2004.

But now Jason Throneberry, an Arkansas native and the director of freshwater programs for the Nature Conservancy in Alabama for the past six years, is fighting to restore the ancient migratory pathway for the sturgeon and countless other fish species, from eels to Alabama shad to mullet. "With these dams in place, the system functions more like a lake," Throneberry explains. "The water moves so slowly that sediment deposits on the bottom, limiting the diversity of habitat."

That carries a heavy price; the Alabama River system is one of the most biodiverse on the planet, with hundreds of fish and mussel species found nowhere else. Between 1982 and 2002, sampling surveys indicated a decline of up to 40 percent in the diversity of fish species, a measure that has only plummeted further since. "We've reached the critical period," Throneberry says. "We are going to start seeing the fish and other aquatic organisms that should be here blinking out."

Late last year, Throneberry led TNC into a partner-ship with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to gather data and hatch a plan for circumventing the dams—each will most likely have either a bypass channel or a rock arch for fish passage. The endeavor will take years, so in the meantime, Throneberry and his team are working to manage stormwater and restorestream banks along the Cahaba to control sedimentation there. "Once the fish can get around those dams," he says, "we want the habitat to be ready to rock and roll."

The reconnection effort has been on TNC's radar for well over a decade. "But it took Jason, with the com-

bination of his scientific expertise and get-it-done attitude, to make it happen," says Mitchell Reid, TNC's Alabama state director. "Restoring the connection in this system, from the Appalachian foothills to the Delta to the Gulf, is the most ecologically important river project we've undertaken in North America."

-Lindsey Liles

Throneberry in the headwaters of the Cahaba River, just northeast of Birmingham.

.03

Organization:

The Nature Conservancy

Location:

Birmingham, Alabama

Since:

2016

Mad Love:

In college and during graduate school, Throneberry became fascinated by nongame, endemic fish. His work with two secretive and tiny species of madtom (miniature catfish) in Great Smoky Mountains National Park inspired him to pivot to the large-scale aquatio habitat restoration he specializes in today.



Jennifer Schopf Rehage →

THE MARINE DETECTIVE

A RESEARCHER
INVESTIGATES THE
HEALTH OF FLORIDA'S
RECREATIONAL FISH
AND FISHERIES—WITH
SHOCKING FINDINGS

AS A YOUNG CHILD, JENNIFER SCHOPF Rehage was exposed to fishing in a singular way. She grew up in Montevideo, Uruguay, where her grandfather presided over a local fishing club that had its headquarters on the ocean. "It was just a bunch of wonderful old gentlemen hanging out together," she recalls. "They made fishing nets by hand, built boats, played cards, and fished and cooked. And all the while, my sister and I were running around between them."

Rehage moved to Miami in 1988, mid-

way through high school, and as an adult continued to immerse herself in marine environments. Today she's a coastal and fish ecologist and professor at Florida International University's Institute of Environment, where she studies how "disturbances," both from natural causes and from humans and water management, affect fish. This year, when her team announced the results of an FIU/Bonefish & Tarpon Trust study on the presence of pharmaceuticals in bonefish, Rehage's findings lit a media firestorm.

"A LOT OF FINGERS GET POINTED IN A LOT OF DIRECTIONS WHEN IT COMES TO WATER QUALITY. WHO'S THE BOGEYMAN: AGRICULTURE, STORMWATER RUNOFF? IN THIS CASE, IT'S ALL OF US"



As lead researcher, Rehage oversaw the analysis of ninety-three South Florida bonefish for 104 commonly prescribed pharmaceuticals. Every single fish tested positive for at least one of the drugs. The average bonefish had seven different drugs in its tissues. One fish had seventeen. Blood pressure meds, antidepressants, antibiotics, opioids—altogether, the bonefish samples included fifty-eight different drugs.

Just as concerning: Researchers found the doped-up bonefish everywhere they looked, from Biscayne Bay to off Key West, near both urban and rural areas. "We did not expect that," Rehage says. Humans typically excrete 50 percent of the pharmaceuticals they consume, and most water treatment plants aren't set up to filter medicine from the water. The leftover chemicals enter rivers, bays, and oceans, and then contaminate shrimp, crabs, and other bonefish prey.

"A lot of fingers get pointed in a lot of

. 84

Home Base:

Florida International University

Location:

Miami, Florida

Since:

2008

Pass It On:

Rehage says she is proud to be affiliated with a university with one of the nation's largest enrollments of first-generation college students. She still teaches an undergrad class or two with people experiencing that milestone just as she once did.

A bonefish swims through seagrass in the Lakes Passage between Key West and Boca Grande Key. Opposite: Rehage, above water.

directions when it comes to water quality," Rehage says. "Who's the bogeyman: agriculture, stormwater runoff? In this case, it's all of us. It literally comes out of your body. And the solution is there, simple and feasible." Although expensive: Upgrading water treatment and septic systems would

go a long way toward removing the drugs.

"We peeked under the covers, and it was like, oh my goodness, it's going to be a bad one," Rehage says. "But we have to come to terms with this, and the study feels like the first step on a long road to make itright."-T. Edward Nickens

Jaret Daniels → ENDANGERED POLLINATORS FIND NEW HOPE THANKS TO A FLORIDA ENTOMOLOGIST

JARET DANIELS DISCOVERED HIS PASsion early; the Wisconsin native reared his first butterfly-a black swallow tail-when he was just eight years old. Several decades, countless pupae, and a PhD in entomology from the University of Florida later, Daniels is at the forefront of the charge to save Southeastern pollinators. In his career, he's worked with more than fifty imperiled insect species-from wide-ranging butterflies to hyperspecialized bees-and at any given time, he and his team of eight entomologists at Gainesville's Florida Museum of Natural History, where he works as a curator at the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity, might have more than a thousand butterflies in various life stages hanging, creeping, or fluttering around the lab.

His efforts to revive the Schaus' swallowtail population, which ten years ago had cratered to just four known individuals in the wild, count among his greatest successes. Daniels began by painstakingly transplanting a hundred precious eggs



Fluttery Feeling:

The Schaus's wallowtail carries a special place in Daniels's heart: He met his wife, Stephanie, while researching the butterfly at the University of Florida. She was working in the Endangered Species Lab there, and they bonded while caring for needy larvae around the clock.

"IT WAS NERVE-RACKING DEALING WITH SUCH AN INCREDIBLY RARE SPECIES," DANIELS SAYS OF THE SCHAUS' SWALLOWTAIL. "WE DIDN'T HAVE A LOT OF WIGGLE ROOM TO BE SUCCESSFUL"

laid by a few females in Biscayne National Park to the lab. "It was nerve-racking dealing with such an incredibly rare species," he remembers. "We didn't have alot of wiggle room to be successful." He managed to pull seventy-five through to adulthood—the start of a still-ongoing captive breeding and reintroduction program that's responsible for some 1,500 Schaus' swallowtails flitting through the hardwood hammocks of the Keys, their sole habitat.

That isn't the only time Daniels has stood between a species and extinction. Scientists thought that the beloved Miami blue—a petite, icy-hued butterfly historically found in the Keys and on the Florida mainland—had vanished forever.

But after their rediscovery in 1999, Daniels started captive breeding them and has midwifed 30,000 of the species since; they now proliferate unassisted in Bahia Honda State Park. Also, this fall, to give endangered migratory monarchs a wing up, he's partnering with the Florida Department of Transportation to use roadside retention basins to plant milkweed and other flowering plants to sustain the butterfly and support breeding on its long journey between Canada and Mexico. And for the frosted elfin, which ranges from the Midwest down to the Panhandle, he is analyzing the population's genetics for clues to their conservation.

Pollinators serve as essential environmental linchpins, propping up the planet's food systems. And butterflies, "something people want to invite into their landscapes," Daniels says, "are the gateway bug to helping people understand that."-LL



From top: A blue morpho; a tree nymph. Opposite: Daniels among his subjects in the Florida Museum of Natural History's Butterfly Rainforest. Hallie Shoffner →

SEED OF CHANGE

A YOUNG FARMER HERALDS THE **EFFECTS OF CLIMATE EXTREMES FROM** HER FAMILY'S RESEARCH SPREAD

ON THE SHOFFNER FAMILY FARM JUST OUTSIDE Newport, Arkansas, the past feels close. Hallie Shoffner works there from a house built for her postmaster great-great-uncle, that later accommodated her grandfather, then her own family, and later still served as an office for the SFR Seed agricultural research farm her parents started in 1988. Her family has lived

in the same place for six generations, and not coincidentally her surname is the name of her town. Still, as any conversation with Shoffner suggests, her thoughts center squarely on the future.

As she's sung to the rafters for numerous panels, podcasts, and presentations, the challenges of farming in the modern era are legion. Since her parents retired, Shoffner has overseen SFR, a now 1,500-acre seed production farm growing rice, corn, wheat, and soybeans. In her six years

there, five of them have included extreme weather events, a biblical-caliber smorgasbord of droughts and downpours, which she figures has cost her upwards of \$133,000. And though she's the first to say she's considered an industrial farmer-a row crop planter who uses pesticides, thousands of gallons of water a year, and synthetic fertilizer-Shoffner has become a vocal climate activist, heralding its detrimental effects to her Instagram followers and legislators alike, and implementing her own regenerative and conservation practices.

Climate change, she says, is the biggest threat facing farmers-and the food chain. "If a hurricane hits the Gulf Coast and demolishes one of the biggest granaries in the world," she explains, "and you can't get your grain sold down to the port, or prices have tanked because grain can't leave the country, that's still climate change affecting you." So just as her parents conducted hundreds of research trials, building a livelihood on a mountain of data, Shoffner now does the same as she navigates new-to-her approaches: cutting back on tillage, or the number of passes machinery makes over a

given piece of ground; swapping out synthetic fertilizer for chicken litter; and substituting in electric water pumps for diesel. All actions that save or make money, as well as cut carbon emissions.

But she and other farmers can't be the only ones to change, she says, which is why she advocates for help on a governmental scale. In the meantime, every choice she makes, every experiment she carries out, every letter to a congressperson she writes, is with an eye to the future-her farm's, and the earth's.

-Jordan P. Hickey

Shoffner on her family's SFR Seed research farm in Arkansas.

IN SHOFFNER'S SIX YEARS AT THE FARM, FIVE OF THEM HAVE INCLUDED EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS, A BIBLICAL-CALIBER SMORGASBORD OF DROUGHTS AND DOWNPOURS

.06

Title: **CEO of SFR Seed**

Location:

Shoffner, Arkansas

Established: 1988

Field Notes:

Shoffner left the farm for several years, using that time to get her master's degree in public service, launch a migrant outreach nonprofit, and work on a mayoral campaign-all of which she says has helped her become a better farmer.



Benny Blanco →

GUIDING PRESENCE

NO MATTER THE PERSONAL COST, THIS FISHING CAPTAIN SHOWS UP FOR THE EVERGLADES

THE FIRST TIME THE SOUTH FLORIDA FISHING guide Benny Blanco flew to Tallahassee to lobby legislators, he put on worn-out penny loafers, navy-blue Dockers from the back of his closet, and a button-down shirt a size or two too snug. "Straight out of Sunday school from ten years earlier," he says with a laugh. He had never before spoken out publicly on behalf of conservation, but a massive, drought-induced spike in hypersalinity in 2015, which killed fifty thousand acres of Florida Bay seagrass, got the now forty-six-year-old off his poling skiff and to the state capital.

A descendant of Cuban fishermen, Blanco began his life as a captain after an injury booted him off the Georgia Tech baseball team, guiding on the side as he worked in construction management. He turned full time in 1998, and after that, he gave his whole heart to the pursuit. But the Everglades devastation, he says, "was a life-changing shock to me. "My depression over this was so bad my wife literally asked me to see a psychiatrist." Instead, he went to Tallahassee with other guides to testify at a water-rights hearing, and was struck with a prophet's zeal. While his flight home taxied down the runway, he called his wife. He needed new clothes. "Because I would be going back. A lot."

Over the past seven years, Blanco has made more than three dozen trips to Tallahassee; Washington, D.C.; and West Palm Beach, where the South Florida Water Management District governing board meets. "A lot of politicians think we're just a bunch of fishermen with straw hats and a can of worms, sitting on the side of a canal," he says. But a typical South Florida

.07

Company:

Fishing Flamingo

Location: Islamorada, Florida

Guiding Since: 1998

Gulf Streaming:

Blanco has channeled his fervor for the environment into the highly respected *Quiding Flow*, a fishing show with story lines anohored in conservation issues available to stream on the outdoors-focused Waypoint TV.



guide can bring in a quarter million dollars per year, an economic impact that broadens with clients' travel, lodging, and meals. "Once they saw we were informed, articulate business owners—and that every day we showed up we were personally missing a full day's work—the conversations changed."

Blanco figures he's given up sixty full-day charters to "meet, testify, speak up, you name it," on his own or with such organizations as Captains for Clean Water, the Everglades Foundation, and Ocean Conservancy. Recently, one of his clients was wrestling with an early morning tarpon when Blanco's phone blew up: Lawmakers were trying to gut a crucial piece of legislation. "We landed the tarpon, and I told my angler: I have good news and bad news," he recalls. "The good news is, you are one hundred percent on tarpon today, and that's a hell of an accomplishment. The bad news is: Our day is done. I have to get to Tallahassee."—TEN

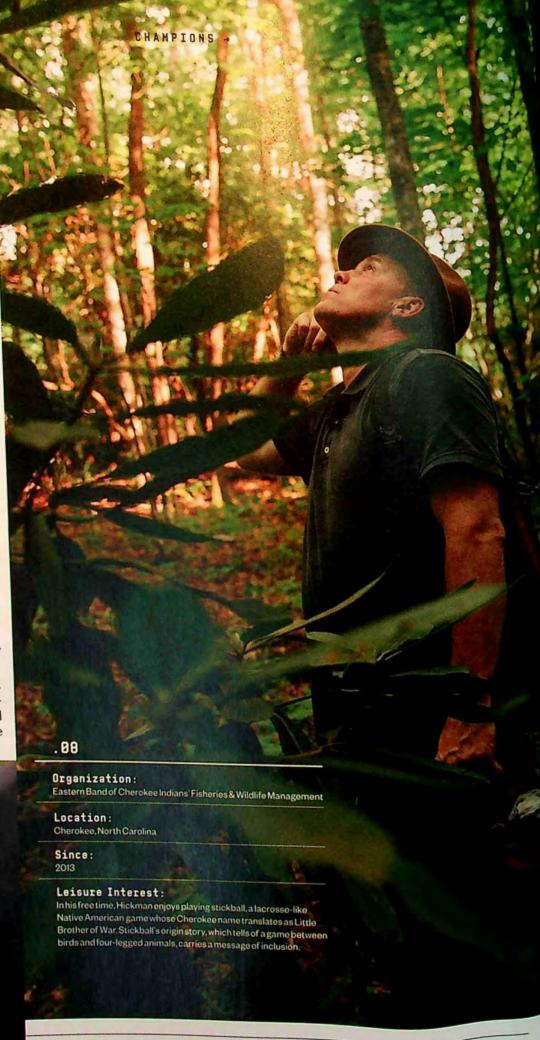
Blanco guides a skiff near Homestead, Florida. Caleb Hickman →

CULTURE KEEPER

A CHEROKEE BIOLOGIST SAFEGUARDS THE FLORA AND FAUNA OF HIS PEOPLE'S NATIVE LAND

A SNIPPET OF CHEROKEE WISDOM: DO not drink the water unless it has run over a salamander's back. From a scientific standpoint, it's sound advice—salamanders, with their semipermeable, sensitive skin, are indicators of water quality, explains Caleb Hickman, an Oklahoma native and citizen of the Cherokee Nation. As the supervisory biologist for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina, Hickman lives at this intersection of culture and ecology.

"It's the theme of my job," he says.
"Whether we are doing conservation, restoration management, or research, it all centers around benefiting the tribe." The





From far left: Caleb Hickman with a ring-necked snake; roaming the Qualla Boundary, in North Carolina: Hannah Chalew in her New Orleans studio.

Eastern Band's home includes the Qualla Boundary, 57,000 acres that encompass much of the flora and fauna that the Cherokee knew and relied upon before their forced removal west to what is now Oklahoma. Elk and bears roam the mountains; fish species that

are found nowhere else swim the rivers; salamanders walk the forest floor; and Hickman oversees it all. He and his small team of two technicians and a lead biologist conduct sometwenty-five projects a year focused on the likes of native creatures such as hellbenders and flying squirrels.

This fall, Hickman will be reintroducing young sicklefin redhorsesonce-abundant fish that have likely disappeared from tribal waters due to damming-back into the Oconaluftee River, in the hopes of reestablishing what was a traditional food source. He's also analyzing how to better use the Boundary's nearly two hundred elk to boost tourism and bring in much-needed funding, and conducting a population study on bears. He has launched an investigation into cu-

riously low numbers of white-tailed deer on tribal lands as well-they were so vital in the past that one of the seven Cherokee clan names is Deer.

Hickman also champions linguistic preservation. "Within the next several decades, there may not be any first-language Cherokee speakers," he says, so he's documenting the names of salamander species to retain and record the cultural knowledge that naming represents. With the help of a symposium of Native speakers who serve as the official Cherokee language keepers, Hickman so far has secured names for five families, six genera, and twenty-two species. The spring salamander is now recorded as the "rainmaker" for its propensity to emerge during spring showers; the Eastern red-spotted newt, "it burns," for its toxic skin; the pygmy salamander, "basket weave-like," for its herringbone pattern. "Cherokee is very descriptive and very precise, so it's perfect for science," Hickman says. "I want to reconnect people to these animals, and to tie the language to our natural resources, which I think is where it belongs."-LL



Hannah Chalew →

A GREENER FUTURE FOR LOUISIANA'S THREATENED LAND-SCAPES EMERGES FROM THIS ARTIST'S PAINTINGS **AND SCULPTURES**

BY THE TIME HANNAH CHALEW HOPS off her bike at her New Orleans studio-a large, airy warehouse and former neighborhood woodshop-she's covered in sweat. But for the thirty-six-year-old multimedia artist, even her mode of transportation matters: "How I'm choosing materials. how I'm getting to my studio-they're part of my practice."

Chalew's heart for conservation traces directly to her homeplace. While she was awayat college in New York, Hurricane Katrinastruck. "Every time I came home from school, the city was so different," she says. "Iwanted to be a part of the rebuilding and

revitalization." Now healing the landscape of southern Louisiana propels her artistry, whether she's hauling rusted pipes from scrapyards for a sculpture, grinding up oak galls for natural ink, or mixing single-use plastic waste with a byproduct of sugar refining for handmade paper.

Inspired by the art triennial Prospect New Orleans, Chalew moved back to the city after graduating, and began melding her creativity with social justice. She pedaled her bike out to neighborhoods abandoned after Katrina, documenting nature's reclamation of the urban landscape and conceiving plein air drawings of natural and man-made environments caught in tension, roots and leaves fiercely springing from chemical plants and underground pipelines. "Here, plant life comes back quickly," she says, "and I thought about the dystopian future we'll inherit if we don't change the course of climate change. I had to imagine a new way forward."

In 2018, she attended Fossil Free Fest, a cultural biennial imagining a greener future. "Through the festival, I started doing more activism, going to marches, getting involved." She led bannermaking workshops, began to think critically about the oil and gas industry's role in Louisiana's economy and culture, and learned from local leaders-especially Black women on the front lines in

"Cancer Alley," a highly polluted region along the Mississippi River between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. "It inspires meto be in community with these women," Chalew says. "And it informs my studio work."

She collaborated with one of those activists, Gail LeBoeuf from Inclusive Louisiana (see right), to create an ink from pollution found outside of a fossil-fuel export facility. "Using the ink is a way to visualize that waste and pollution," Chalew says. One of the resulting screen prints, Overburden, studies the relationship between exploited land and the oil and gas industry: Pipes root out from a tree stump, haphazardly overlapping with the organic underground landscape. The sale of some prints has helped Chalew give back to local grassroots organizations like Inclusive Louisiana and Rise St. James. "I want to shift our perception," she says, "about what's possible.'

-Gabriela Gomez-Misserian

.09

Cause:

Art, education, and environmental activism

Location:

New Orleans, Louisiana

Started:

Drawn from Life:

Chalew constructs living sculptures, growing native plants on intricate forms made from plastic waste and sorap metal. She gathers trash from her own familiar spaces, including her studio and home. "I've used COVID-19 and pregnancy tests in my sculptures," she says. "They become autobiographical."





GAIL LEBOEUF COMES "STRAIGHT OUTTA CONVENT," SHE says with a laugh, a town at roughly the midpoint of "Cancer Alley," a stretch along the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans dotted with more than 150 refineries and plants, many related to the petrochemical industry. There, in St. James Parish, LeBoeuf cofounded the grassroots nonprofit Inclusive Louisiana to advocate for the area, historically plagued by pollution, and its working-class citizens-whether that be to a parish council, the state legislature, or the Environmental Protection Agency.

In high school, a civics teacher encouraged LeBoeuf's interest in history and the law and required her to attend a council meeting. She kept at it, staying involved in community goings-on even as she toiled thirty-plus years at two area plants. Learning about and working with other residents in 2017 to fight the Bayou Bridge Pipeline, which now runs through predominantly Black neighborhoods, she says, served as a "wake-up call." She then joined the organization Rise St. James, led by environmental activist Sharon Lavigne, which, along with other local groups, successfully From top: Gail LeBoeuf, photographed in front of a Gramercy, Louisiana, refinery; Chalew works on a new sculpture.

.10

Organization:

Inclusive Louisiana

Location:

St. James Parish, Louisiana

Established:

Root Causes:

By age five, LeBoeuf says, she realized inequality existed due to the neighbors who constantly knocked at the door of her family—trusted community members who owned a grocery store—for loans and help keeping their homes, and to ask them to safeguard important documents for them.

persuaded the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to halt a plastics plant estimated to become one of the world's largest such pollution-causing facilities.

In 2021, she and her friends Barbara Washington and Myrtle Felton started Inclusive Louisiana not only to continue to oppose other incoming plants but also toaddress "everyday injustices," she says, such as a tall grass and blighted houses ordinance that unduly affects Black ownership. "If people lose their homes in Convent, that's a win-win" for hopeful plant operators seeking land.

On a recent Wednesday, LeBoeuf, who is now seventy, helped organize an event at a local park to measure pollution levels—an action, she says, the community wouldn't need if near by plants had been required to have buffer zones around schools, parks, churches, and homes, or if the bill they advocated for this past legislative session requiring continuous air-quality monitoring had passed: "We're not going to let that go."

Next, she was headed to Geneva, Switzerland, for a human rights conference. "You have to tell your story about where you live, where you come from," she says, to make change. That includes stories told through art, like the pieces Hannah Chalew (see page 127) creates using contaminated soil LeBoeuf helped her find. When she first saw Chalew's pieces at an exhibition, "I fell in love with them," she says. "Art can helpyoudeal with life."-Amanda Hackert



MFFT OUR PANEL

THE METHODOLOGY: To help select our Champions of Conservation, we called in experts with a broad range of perspectives, from sustainability in packaging to ecosystem and species restoration. "There is no place in the world that compares to the ecologically diverse habitat of the South," says the Nature Conservancy's Dale Threatt-Taylor. "I felt hopeful just reading about the work of the outstanding conservationists working to protect it."

From left: Durrell Smith is a Georgia-based hunter, birddog trainer, podcast host, and artist who cofounded the Minority Outdoor Alliance in 2020. The organization's mission is to cultivate inclusiveness in the outdoors. Last year, Smith received the Orvis Breaking Barriers Award for his work bringing new participants into the upland bird hunting, bird dog, and wing-shooting communities.

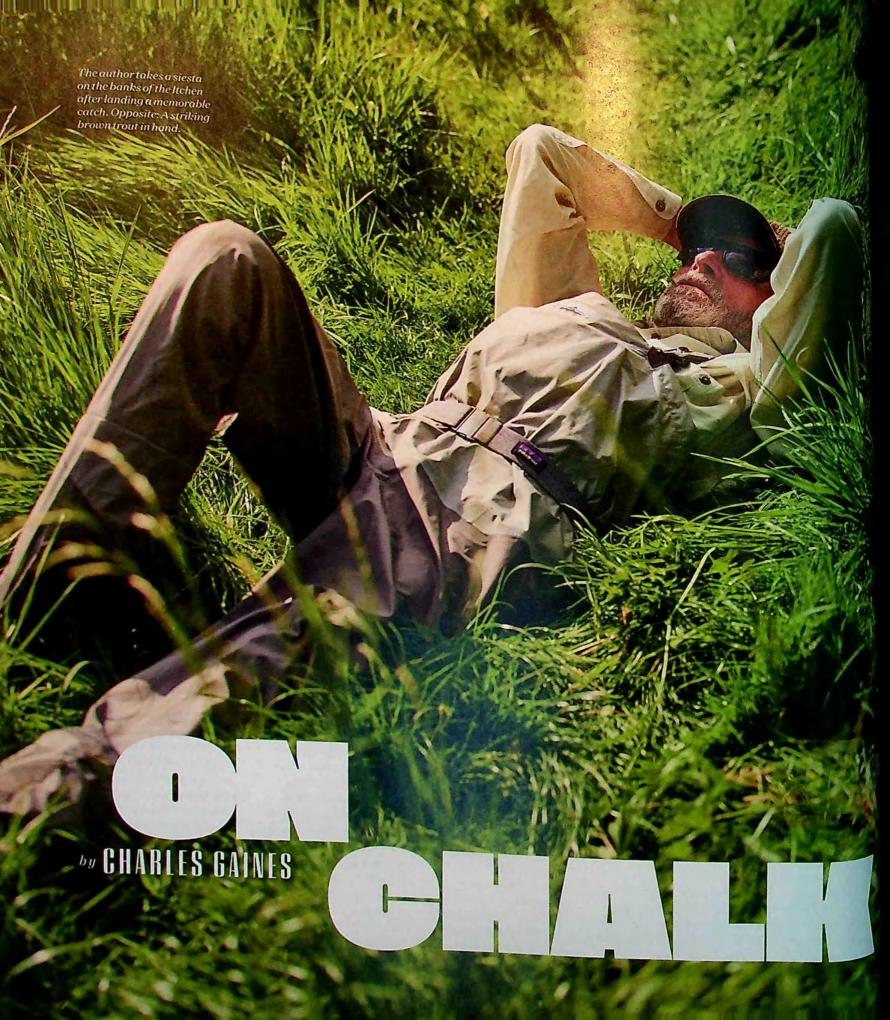
Carol Denhof serves as president of the Longleaf Alliance, working across the Southeast to restore the region's formerly dominant longleaf pine forests, which once blanketed up to ninety million agres from Texas to Virginia. She took the helm of the organization in 2019 and fosters partnerships, provides landowner assistance, and offers science-based outreach to promote longleaf habitat.

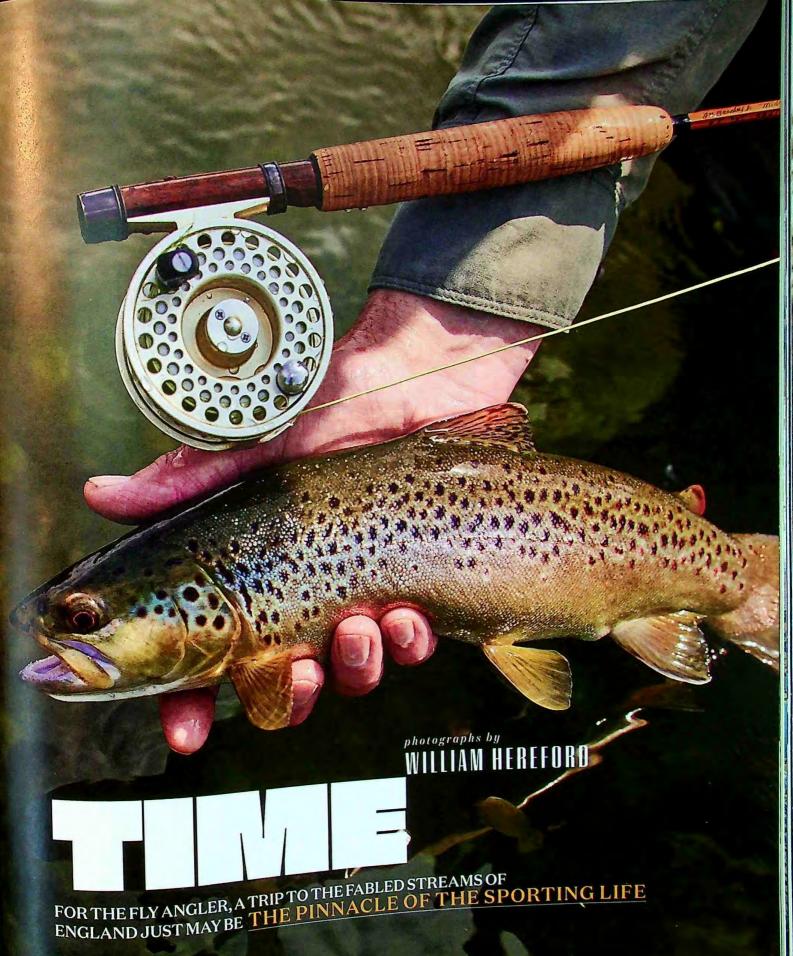
Wes Carter is the thirdgeneration president of Atlantio Packaging, the largest privately owned industrial packaging company in North America. As a lifelong outdoorsman, he feels both a connection to the land and a responsibility to create sustainable supply chains. Through his A New Earth Project and other initiatives, he is committed to reducing plastic and partnering with outdoor enthusiasts, brands, and packaging suppliers to implement industry-level change.

Dale Threatt-Taylor brings twenty-five years of experience in conservation leadership to her role as the executive director of the Nature Conservancy in South

Carolina. She oversees projects and partnerships ranging from forest restoration to the revival of living shorelines to species protection plans.

Simon Perkins took over as the third-generation president of Orvis in 2020, having started at the company eight years earlier after a stint as a hunting and fly-fishing guide in Montana. Under his leadership, the outdoor retailer continues to support conservation projects with such organizations as the Everglades Foundation, the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and Trout Unlimited, and supports diversity in fly fishing through its Breaking Barriers Awards and by becoming the first company to sign the Angling for All pledge along with Brown Folks Fishing.





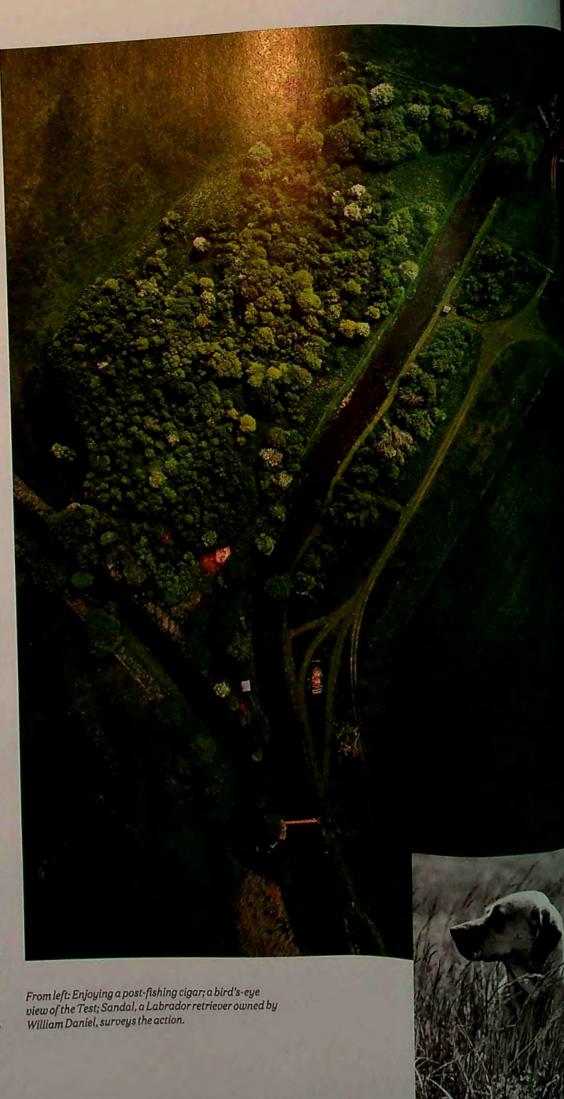


you are a trout angler or aspire to be one, you owe it to yourself to visit at least once the chalk streams of England. Granted, New Zealand, Argentina, and Kamchatka beckon with marvelous trouting, but my aim here is to tell you why the fishing on the English chalk streams may very well be the most variously satisfying version of that sport to be had anywhere in the world.

There are numerous reasons for this, but let us begin with a bit of hydrology. The chalk streams take their name from a subsoil band of calcium carbonate, or "chalk," formed of compacted shells a hundred million years ago when the British Isles lay under three hundred feet of ocean. This band runs for some three hundred miles through England, from Yorkshire in the north to Dorset in the south, and chalk streams are born when the plentiful English rain seeps through the chalk into an aquifer and then is forced back to the surface as springs, which join to become streams.

Emerging at a constant 50°F, filtered by the chalk into stainless clarity, high in alkalinity, rich in nutrients, and all but impervious to drought and flood, the streams are nothing short of perfect trout habitat. They are also soul-fillingly beautiful, in what the English chalk stream devotee and angling writer Charles Rangeley-Wilson calls their "verdant opulence" and "sedate grandeur." Ambling elegantly through idyllic green valleys, rich in starwort, water celery, ranunculus, and other trout-foodnurturing weeds, they are, in Rangeley-Wilson's deft description, "constant, equable, cool, fertile."

There are over two hundred of these





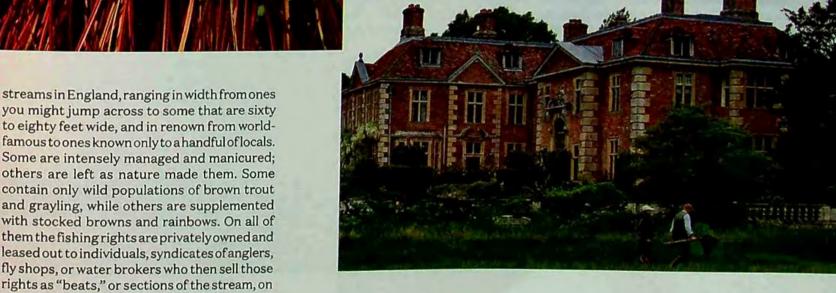
the previous trip: the Kennet in Berkshire, the upper Avon in Wiltshire, the Bourne in Hampshire, and, also in Hampshire, the respective king and queen of chalk streams, the Test and the Itchen.

The latter two are arguably the two most famous trout waters on earth, despite there being numerous rivers around the world where more and bigger trout are caught. They are uniquely legendary because men have fished them for at least four centuries, and in the past two centuries many of those men have written voluminously, well, and to a worldwide readership about that angling. One of their most determined chroniclers was an assiduous Victorian gentleman named F. M. Halford, who in the last two decades of the nineteenth century adopted them as a laboratory in which to develop

From left: A fine hat made better by an ever-growing collection of dry flies; guide and angler pass Heale House on the way to the river.

and refine the art and science of dry fly fishing for trout. In two books and many articles for The Field magazine, he made a cult of that method of fishing, with himself as high priest. In addition to dispensing revolutionary specifics on the dress-

ing and use of dry flies, Halford took it upon himself to codify for his readers a proper behavior for that use-a sort of etiquette of onstream comportment that pays equal respect to both the trout and other anglers. That etiquette has proved to be as durable (it is still practiced today to one degree of strictness or another on the Test. the Itchen, and a few other chalk streams) as it has nontransferable (those streams are the only places on earth where it is practiced).



you might jump across to some that are sixty to eighty feet wide, and in renown from worldfamous to ones known only to a handful of locals. Some are intensely managed and manicured; others are left as nature made them. Some contain only wild populations of brown trout and grayling, while others are supplemented with stocked browns and rainbows. On all of them the fishing rights are privately owned and leased out to individuals, syndicates of anglers, fly shops, or water brokers who then sell those rights as "beats," or sections of the stream, on a daily basis to an allotted number of rods per beat. The price per rod per day can vary from

as little as lunch money on the lesser-known chalks to upwards of a thousand dollars on the legendary ones.

With all that be wildering variety to choose from, on my first visit to the chalk streams over a decade ago, my friend Tom Montgomery and I opted to experience as much of it as we could in ten days and fished that many streams from Dorset on the southern coast to the northern shores of Norfolk, in the eastern part of the country. For my second trip—taken this past May with my wife, my daughter, my niece, and a group of hearty, trout-loving friends-I decided we would limit ourselves to my five favorite streams from

"So, what do I do and not do here?" I asked my guide on my first visit to the Test.

"You don't get in the water," he said. "We fish from a mowed path along the bank. Cast only upstream, of course, and altogether with dryflies. That should do it."

To be honest, it seemed a bit prissy, and designed to catch as few trout as possible. But by the time that trip was over, I had come to love Halford's code of manners, and to agree with J. W. Hills, the author of the delightful 1924 book A Summer on the Test, that it had produced "the most finished school of fishing in the world."





The Itchen | Day 1

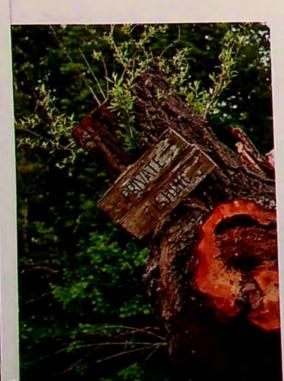


old dust" is the way William Daniel describes the Itchen beat we are on today. "If it ever came up for sale, which it won't, it would go for more than two million pounds a mile."

He ought to know. Daniel is one of England's top water brokers and has provided our group with the beats we are fishing over the next five days. A former London investment banker

and graduate of Eton and Cambridge, he started his company, Famous Fishing, twenty-seven years ago to "access the inaccessible" in chalk stream angling and wing shooting. A robust sixty-two, he is a large, chatty, boyishly keen and charming man, a deadly trout fisherman, and as much fun on a stream as anyone I know.

Leaving two of our group with a guide on the beat below us, Daniel, the photographer William Hereford, and I walk slowly upstream along a small path, looking for rises. It is a pluperfect May morning, clear and warm. A swan swims ahead of us trailing four cygnets in her wake. Wood pigeons coo, and reed warblers start from the brush bordering the stream, which here is some three to four feet deep and twenty to thirty feet across, a smooth, clear, even flow over a gravel bottom and ranunculus weed that waves in that flow like a woman's





hair let out in a breeze.

"Study to be quiet" are Izaak Walton's concluding words in The Compleat Angler, and on no trout water I know of is that injunction better advice today, almost four hundred years after it was written, than on this, Walton's home stream. Part of the reason the Itchen is so highly valued is that it is not stocked, and the angling for its wild, world-weary brown trout, which have seen it all for centuries, is as challenging as it gets. A good day for a seasoned angler here might give up four trout. Unless, that is, she is here during the mayfly.

Ihad timed our trip to coincide with the annual mid-May to early-June hatch of a large, juicy insect named *Ephemera danica* but referred to on the chalks simply as "the mayfly." The short but profuse airborne life of this bug, occurring over roughly a two-week period that varies a bit from year to year, causes the normally discriminating chalk stream trout to gorge themselves with such recklessness that the period is known as the Duffer's Fortnight.

Alas, for this duffer on this morning, there are no danica on the water or in the air. In fact, there are few observable insects of any kind. So, this being the Itchen, I do not tie on the nymph I would normally prospect with, but a small Parachute Adams dry flyinstead. And after just under a half hour of walking slowly, as far away from the bank as possible, with frequent stops studying to be quiet and scanning the pools ahead for rises, we find a trout to try it on.

But, this being the Itchen, the fish is rising in an all but impossible lie to reach with a fly. For one thing, that lie is directly underneath an overhanging willow branch; for another, even though I get into the stream (allowed on this beat of the Itchen though not on others) and wade up to within casting range, another willow branch behind me makes an aerial cast impossible.

"You'll have to roll cast to him," Daniel says with relish from the bank.

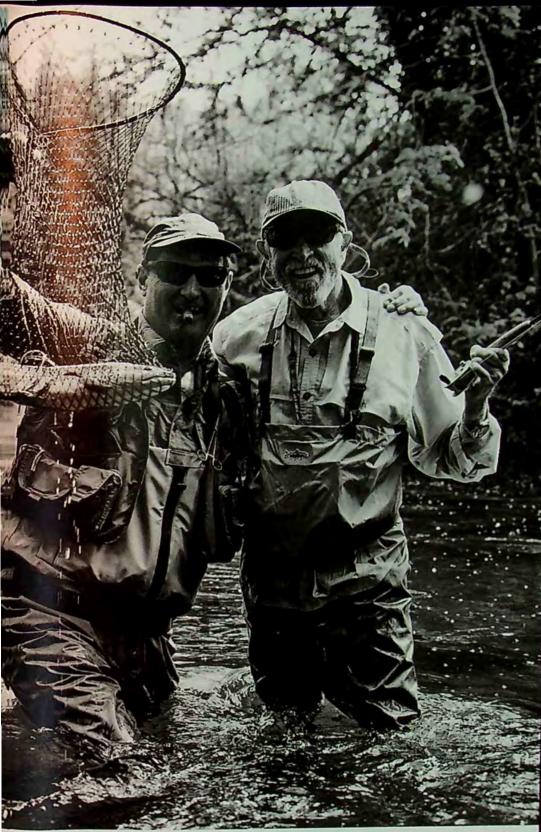
"But I can't see," I answer pathetically, mouthing the bitter pill of anticipated failure on the first trout of the trip.

"What do you mean you can't see?" he thunders.

"The sun, William. Everything ahead of me is in glare."

"Just roll out a cast or two, that's the boy.
I'll tell you when you're on him."

Left to right, from top: A group sets off for a morning of action; dry flies on a river keeper's vest; a reminder that the chalk streams are private; tools of the trade. Opposite, from left: Daniel and the author celebrate after landing a beautiful brown on the ltchen; a beer hits the spot in Winchester.



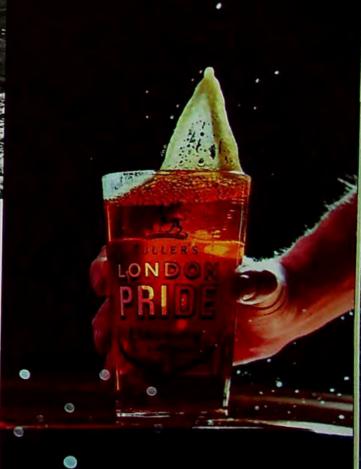
which has welcomed hungry and thirsty travelers to its peerless pub since 1755.

Our group includes two women who do not fish and two who will fish for only two days. For them, William Daniel has designed a separate it in erary that includes a guide and van transportation each day to nearby sites of interest. They visit Stonehenge and the famous water gardens at Longstock Park, walk cobbled streets in the World Heritage Site city of Bath, and have a look at the original Magna Carta at Salisbury Cathedral. Much as I enjoy the fishing, I feel a twinge of jealousy each morning when these "non-anglers" venture out for more world-class sightseeing. And so, on the fourth day, I join them for a walking tour of the ancient city of Winchester, the first capital of England.

Our guide is Lady Sally Peel, a tall, graceful woman with one of those fine English faces mixing steely resolution with amiability, whose husband, departed from this life at 10l, had been the queen's obstetrician. Peel is seventy-one, with a quick mind, an endearing smile, and an encyclopedic knowledge of Winchester. With her lecturing learnedly at each stop, we visit the house where Jane Austen lived out her last days and died in 1817; and then Winchester College, a school for, she tells us, "the cleverest boys in England," founded in 1382. But the crown jewel of the tour is

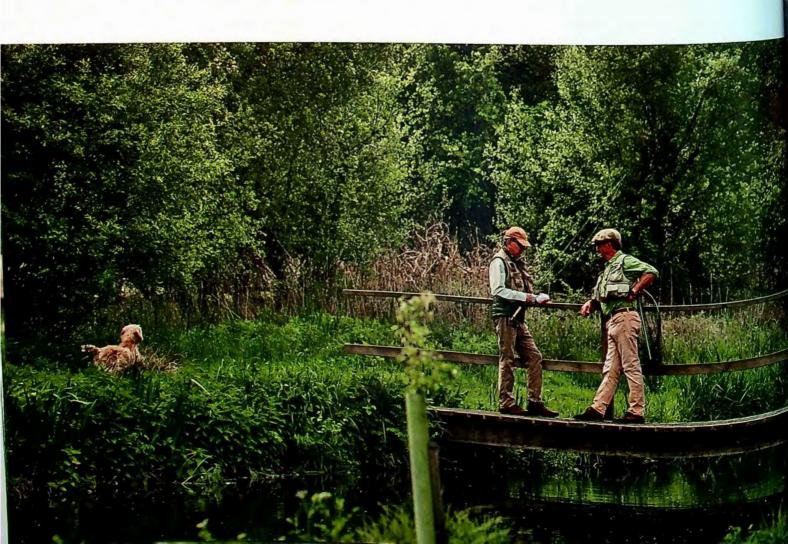
I will spare you, patient reader, the repeated "Two inches to the right" and the "No, no, no! Too far left"; the take that I cannot see and strike too late; then the wait, with slim hope that the trout has not felt the hook; the five changes of flies... I will tell you only that this lovely three-pound I tchen brown comes back finally to a tiny Iron Blue, and that it is one of the most gratifying catches of my life.

FOR OUR ENTIRE STAY IN HAMPSHIRE, WE ENJOY PERFECT WEATHer and the myriad pleasures of the rose-covered English countryside in May. We split our visit between the instantly lovable towns of Stockbridge on the Test and Winchester on the Itchen and have very good lodging and food in both—at the Grosvenor hotel in Stockbridge, and in Winchester at the Wykeham Arms,





 $\label{lockwise} Clockwise from \ above: A \ peacock \ holds \ court \ near \ premier \ chalk \ water; a \ chalk \ stream \ mean ders \ through \ the \ country \ side; a \ brown \ trout \ prior \ to \ release; \ Johnny \ Johns \ confers \ with \ his \ guide.$





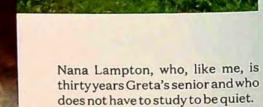
Winchester Cathedral, an enormous amalgam of Gothic, Norman, and Romanesque architecture whose construction, in the shape of a cross, began in 1079, though a church existed at that site four centuries before that.

I could happily have spent two or three days in the cathedral's great vaulted rooms, paying homage to Jane Austen and Izaak Walton, who are buried there, looking at some of the oldest of the great medieval quires in England; the high altar fronting a lovely fifteenth-century screen; the magnificent twelfth- and thirteenth-century wall paintings of Christ's passion in the Holy Sepulchre Chapel. And I could have as happily spent another full day wandering around the cathedral's library of rare books and illuminated manuscripts. But, of course, there is fishing to be done. And despite the absence of danica, that fishing is better than good everywhere we go, and some of it unforgettable.

THE TWO AND A HALF MILES OF THE RIVER AVON AT HEALE ESTATE is as close to the Paradise of Anglers as I ever expect to get. Running through twelve hundred green acres of sheep-dotted meadows and parkland, and overlooked by the magisterial Heale House, a sixteenth-century manor house where King Charles II hid from parliamentarian troops on his flight to France in 1651, the river has not a hair out of place, and

its flow is so entrancingly sedative that one might forget one is there to fish.

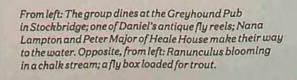
That is, if one didn't have a daughter like mine, who possesses an osprey's single-mindedness of angling purpose. "Why are you two just standing there?" Greta says to me and my great friend



The three of us are sharing two rods for the morning without a guide, which means I amthere mostly to tie on flies. As Nana and I follow Greta to the bottom of our beat, peacocks shriek from the grounds of Heale House, a supine pig grunts in its sleep, pheasant fly from the meadows to the hedgerows, and mallards flush from the stream ahead of us.

We spend the entire morning fishing less than a half mile of the Avon, I and these strong, accomplished women whose company I

cherish, two of five gracing the Avon this day. Watching Greta and Nana pick off trout after rising trout in this ineffably pleasant place, I am awash in one of the overwhelming surges of gratitude to which, in my dotage, I am given; and moved as well to feel more than a little sorry for Halford and his Victorian buddies who did not countenance women on the streams.





The Test / Day 5



very fishing trip has for me a defining occurrence of unmistakable emphasis in which people, place, and action come together, like lightning in a bottle, into a meaning that encapsulates the entire journey.

The most efficient way to harvest trout in a stream is to dynamite it. In Izaak Walton's day, the preferred method was to spear the chalk stream trout at night by torchlight. Then followed netting; using trotlines and blowlines, the latter a form of dapping with live insects; fishing with minnows and worms. But men, to paraphrase W. B. Yeats, are in love with what is difficult, particularly those who over the centuries have come to fish for sport over sustenance. With Halford and his acolytes, finding elegant solutions to difficult trouting problems overrode necessity as the mother of invention, and they replaced the sunk brace of wet flies fished downstream of the generation preceding them with upstream and dry, along with a formidable knowledge of entomology.

The big trout my friend Johnny Johns and I are looking at is not rising, but it is "on the fin," meaning suspended in the water column and active. (No gentleman, of course, is discourte-ous enough to fish for a trout lying doggo on the bottom and clearly in no mood to be fished for!) And by its darts from side to side and glimpses of its white mouth opening, we know that this one is feeding—but on subsurface nymphs.

Johnny and I are on a carrier stream, or side channel, of the hallowed waters of the middle Test, on my favorite of all the chalk stream beats I have fished, a beat that is dead man's shoes: all but inaccessible, though accessed by William Daniel, and so exclusive it can't be named. Again, it is a flawless day; again, there are few bugs in the air or on the water, and no sign of danica. (Though it must be mentioned that that very evening, on this very beat, "the mayfly" began. And those in our group who were there for it witnessed what one of them, a widely traveled angler, called the greatest experience of his fishing life: clouds of danica spinners everywhere in the air; the trout-rises for them, as they deposited their eggs and fell dying to the water, like rain pocking the calm flow of the Test; and dry fly fishing that duffers and experts alike dream of.)

Johnny and I have each caught a rising trout, after numerous fly changes, on a tiny black dry I had in my box that both trout took indifferently and only after three or four drifts over them. Johnny is a Harvard Law whiz of the insurance industry and a black-diamond angler, but, in short, we don't know what we are doing. We do, however, know how to do it, and at this point in the trip neither of us would dream of doing it otherwise.

Johnny puts the fly perfectly over the fish numerous times to the trout's utter disdain.

"Too bad. We could catch him on a nymph."
"But of course we won't."

He reels in and we are leaving to find another fish when big, voluble William Daniel walks up behind us with his yellow Lab and an ever-present unlit cigar clenched in his teeth. We tell him about the unobliging trout. He asks to see Johnny's fly and promptly snips it off. "I'll tell you what," he says, pulling a fly box from his vest. "I believe the mayfly may start soon, today or tomorrow. The conditions are just about right, and I wouldn't be surprised if the fish are onto that and might start looking up for them. Let's try your chap with one of these."

Then, holding out a danica imitation, a Cream Wulff modified to his specifications, he proceeds to give Johnny and me as learned a streamside tutorial on chalk stream expertise as any Halford might have given: on how trout look for certain markers to identify an insect; how the black at the base of the tail of his fly exactly matches that on danica; how the badger hackle is dyed black where it meets the body to match that junction on the bug.

"Those things are markers for the trout, you see. And they key a stronger response than would a fly that might look to you and me more like the real thing." With that, he ties the well-marked Wulff to Johnny's tippet and we revisit our chap.

Watching Johnny kneel and strip out line, I seem to see Halford himself, or the legendary angling writer Francis Francis. or the greatest chalk stream angler of them all, George Selwyn Marryat, kneeling there in jacket, tie, and plus fours, having compressed decades of hard-won knowledgeof all the minute and intricate interdependencies of stream, insects, and troutinto the fly at the end of his leader. And there it is-the lightning in the bottle! As Johnny makes one false cast and lays the flyon the water, all the glorious history, culture, science, and art of the chalk streams coalesce for me into as vivid, if untranslatable, a vermiculate scroll as that on a brown trout's flank.

This one weighs four pounds, and Johnny catches it, upstream and dry, on his very first cast.

If You Go

The two-week period from mid-May to early June known as the Duffer's Fortnight is by no means the only time when good dry-flyfishing may be had on the English chalk streams. There are prolific hatches of insects throughout the summer, and fishing the dry fly (as well as nymphs wherever they are allowed) can produce excellent results anytime from May to October. famousfishing.co.uk





THE DUCKS OF HOME

A FEW CLASSIC SOUTHERN HAUNTS-AND THEIR CHALLENGES-CALL ONE LIFELONG WATERFOWL HUNTER BACK SEASON AFTER SEASON

THE HORSE SWAMP

Under the cypress trees, I sit on the remains of an ancient beaver dam, mossy and moldering. Myson, Jack, sits on a fallen log. It's an arrangement we've settled into over dozens of duck hunts here. We are far enough apart that we can each safely swing ashotgun, but close enough that I can hand him a venison tenderloin biscuit without making much movement. And we're close enough to carry on a conversation.

That has turned out to be the most important reason I lease the Horse Swamp. The duck action is irregular here-heck, it can be largely absent-but the gorgeous old beaver pond is just far enough of a drive from the house to make us feel like we're getting away. We know every stump and creek channel. We have hunkered down under those cypresses and talked our way through Jack's middle school social angst, high school girlfriends, and college application essays, and most recently, how to navigate his new job and new life in a distant city. We have killed ducks and geese,



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to be sure. But what we remember most clearly, and why we return so often, is how the Horse Swamp seems to be a place that leads to deep thinking. Our place.

I travel widely to hunt ducks, on treks that can take me to boreal Canada and rocky Maine and the tidal reaches of the Columbia River in Oregon. But most of my hunting occurs in the South, and like most waterfowlers, I suspect, I return to the same places time and again. The Horse Swamp is one of those spots. We named it for the horse pasture we have to cross to get to the water. Even in the dark, those cypress trees form a certain silhouette against the sky that greets us as we push the canoe into the swamp. I see them in my memories, and I see them in my daydreams of Horse Swamp hunts to come.

I've long thought that a sense of place is a heart thing, discrete from intellect, but I've had to reconsider that position. I recently read about three scientists who shared a 2014 Nobel Prize for their discoveries of specialized brain cells in rats that work together to build mental maps of the spaces they frequent, and store that information for recall whenever they return. In the brain's hippocampus are so-called "place cells" that support spatial memory. Every time a ratin a maze crossed a familiar spot, these neurons activated. At the same time, in the medial entorhinal cortex adjacent to the hippocampus, what the researchers called "grid cells" activated as well. Information flows between these two brain cell types, and together, the cells form what the Nobel assembly called "an inner GPS in the brain." Scientists hold that the human brain also most likely contains these cells, and together they allow us to identify places and to sort and organize memories that are tied to specific locations.

The takeaway: When I move into view of those Horse Swamp cypresses, the swelling I feel in my heart has roots deep in my gray, furrowed noggin. Those fuzzy feelings are the by-product of neurons sparking across millions of microscopic synapses in the hippocampus and medial entorhinal cortex. My love for the Horse Swamp is only partly an emotional response. The same goes for my affinities for other Southern duck haunts I frequent. These affections are literally wired into my brain, as much a part of who I am as my struggles with math and my love for collards.

That's some deep rumination to spring from a morning in a duck swamp. But in a Southern duck blind, there's often a surplus of time for unencumbered thinking.

NO-NAME CREEK

heducks know something is not quite right, but they have yet to figure out the game. I angle the paddle so the blade passes under the canoe, pull it past my hip, and then scull it forward silently, never lifting it from the water. The canoe shimmies slightly, and I cringe. The ducks are forty yards away, and that meager movement jostles the bamboo and holly that camouflage the boat, nearly encircling it. Two of the wood ducks raise their heads in an alert pose, feathered crests erect, red eyes searching. I let the canoe drift. Thirty-five yards now, and I hear my heart thumping.

Another few ducks suddenly emerge from behind a fallen tree, swimming quickly. In the bow seat, Jack signals to me with his fingers held behind his back: Three birds, now five. He shifts the shotgun slightly, moving the muzzle toward the birds, and it's going to happen any split second now, as I turn the bow to give him a clearer shot.

Twenty yards now. Fifteen. Close enough that I can make out the lemon feathers on the drakes' breasts. They're almost too close to shoot when the first woodie flushes, and one duck might still have a toe on the water when Jack's shot sends the birds vaulting for the sky in a detonation of wings and webbed feet and shot raking the surface.

Much as I love to see the sun come up from a duck blind, I may love to paddle a canoe into a flock of ducks a bit more. This particular stream flows through a buddy's large farm, fed by beaver-dammed tributaries that wind through miles of woods. I like a body of water small enough to shoot all the way across, and kinked up like a scuppernong vine, with each twist and turn revealing new water. It's like hunting a few dozen places all in one morning.

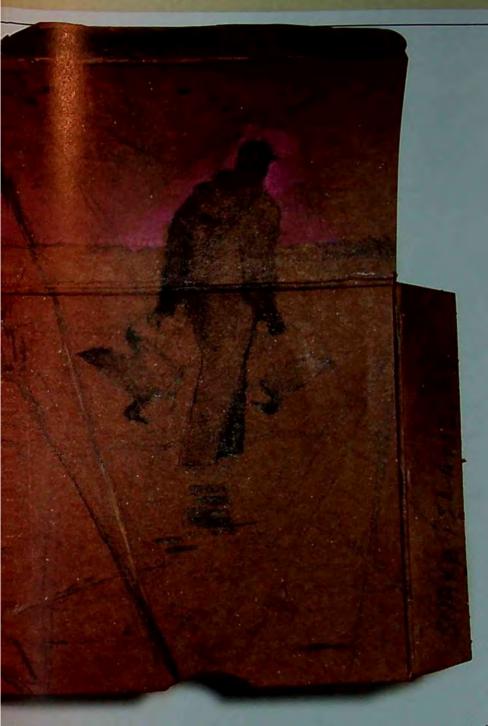
We wait for a bitter night to freeze swamps and beaver ponds, and push off in the morning in a carefully camouflaged canoe laden with spare clothing, a camp stove, and venison stew. We've hunted the creek often enough to know which bends tend to hold the wood ducks and where we might see a goose. We have lunch along the same timbered bluff. It's a curious blend of the familiar and the unpredictable, for the ducks could be around any bend and tucked into any fallen treetop.

Imove the boat as slowly as possible, never faster than the creek's natural rate of flow, which is far harder and more skillfully demanding than paddling at a normal cadence. To be honest, I'm just as happy in the stern, paddle in hand, while a pal handles the shooting. On these floats, it feels as if I'm moving through two different dimensions: I am flowing through the land-scape itself, the timbered bluffs sliding by in slow motion as I move in and out of the shadows of white-barked sycamores, their twisted branches groping over the creek, seeking sunlight. Pileated woodpeckers swoop low in front of the boat. Put a duck in the picture, though, and my focus narrows instantly. I am stalking prey now. Each movement of the paddle is planned and deliberate: Keep the boat pointed straight at the bird, to minimize its profile. Scull the paddle to dampen movement. No matter how many times I've paddled this creek, with a duck in view, everything old is new again.

I pull the paddle past my hip, cut the distance to the ducks, and move more deeply into the moment. Deeper, always. And always just a little bit closer.



hey come from behind us, from the rice field across the levee, a wad of teal that shape-shifts as it moves like an inkblot shot from a cannon. |||. "Oh, shit! Birds!" Jimmy Robinson hisses. "Don't move!" he says, and, of course, we all instantly scramble around in the pit blind to cop a look before we freeze into place. The teal boil over the blind so close the rush of wind nearly lifts our hats, and the flock banks hard over THE the water to skirt the decoys, each bird moving in concert with the SNAKE ISLAND others, like a miniature murmuration of starlings. They're curious but not convinced, so they make another sweep around the flooded HUNT field, then turn for the decoys. "This time we take them," says Jimmy's father-in-law, Fred Silverstein, the patriarch of the group, with teeth gritted and gray locks peeking out from under his cap like the curled feathers on the back of a mallard. Then Jimbo Robinson-Jimmy's son, the one they call "C.E.-Bo" for his take-charge approach—calls the shot, and five of us 144 OCT. / NOV. 2022 GARDEN&GUN



rise, trying to focus on a single bird in the whirling dervish of ducks that dips, dives, and rockets skyward with the first shotgun report. Four teal fall, and Jimbo sends the dog. "Not a bad showing, fellows," Silverstein says. "Those ducks weren't going to land, so it was now or never."

That kind of calculus is often what it takes to put ducks in the bag down he-ah. We get the smart ducks, Southern hunters like to say. It's a sheepish defense, a way of compensating for tough days in a blind, but it's largely true. By the time a tundra-bred canvasback or a pintail from the prairies or a black duck hatched in some dark boreal fen makes it to the South, it has been harried and hammered for hundreds of miles.

It has seen every arrangement of decoys and heard every duck call. Southern hunters yearn for a polar vortex or lake-effect snow or a nor'easter to send the ducks down, even as we know that what rides the wind will be the battle-hardened leftovers.

Those are the birds we watch for from the rim of this Arkansas pit blind, a half hour west of Stuttgart, the South's most acclaimed duck hunting area. It's a mix of sprawling rice fields and flooded timber, labyrinthed with sloughs and ditches and creeks and rivers, and a duck club seemingly every square mile.

Over the past decade, I've fallen in with a memorable crowd in Arkansas. Once a year, for three or four days, I hunt at the Snake Island Duck Club. Housed in an abandoned cinder-block church, off a dirt road flanked by rice fields and timber for miles, it's a family club, nothing fancy about it, though every square inch of Snake Island has become hallowed ground to me. Jack and I revel in our status as adopted family. A few years ago, we arrived at Snake Island to find that we had our own Christmas stockings hanging from the fireplace mantel with those of the Silverstein and Robinson families. Granted, our stockings were used white athletic socks thumbtacked in place, but that only added to their value.

I love the adventure of hunting new waters, but there is something that feels almost sacred in hunting familiar places time and again. Sacred in the sense that the act of returning requires measures of both hope and faith, and in the sense that there is always an expectation of blessing. And duck blind blessings manifest themselves in many forms. Each sunrise from a blind is like a diamond-tipped stylus traveling the grooves in a vinyl record, translating the twisting flight of a wood duck and the clean smell of mud into music. I've seen a lot of Snake Island sunrises, some filled with ducks and some filled with the absence of ducks. But none have been empty.

What is curious, however, is why some flooded fields seem to hold ducks year after year, when an almost exact duplicate just across the ditch or down the road is nearly devoid of birds. I once asked a waterfowl biologist about this. He laughed and said, "You'll have to ask the ducks."

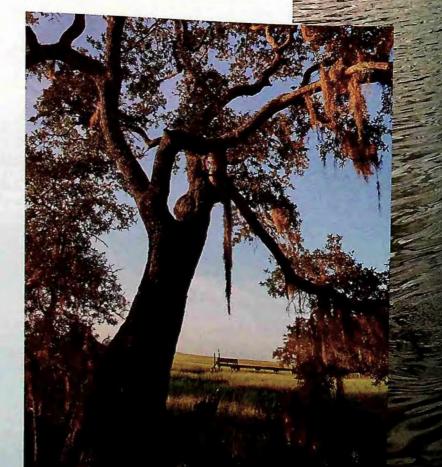
But then he offered a thought completely unfounded in science, though one that makes a sort of visceral sense. For centuries, he said, this stretch of Arkansas was a broad mosaic of wet woods and water. Then the land was settled, the forests cut down, and the clearings ditched and leveed. He wondered if the ducks might still be drawn to those places where the long-gone creeks and swamps used to be, gathering in those rice fields that were once flooded timber or a meandering mire.

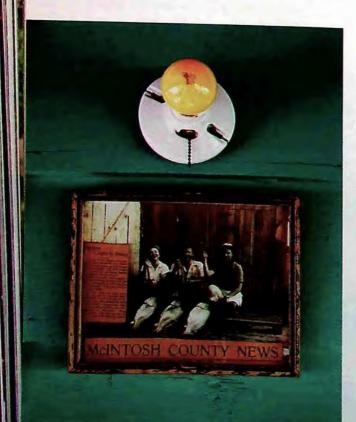
So, I wonder: If we could look inside their tiny skulls, perhaps we might see place and grid cells firing with the cognitive memories of a thousand generations of ducks as they drift down to some ghost of a wetland past. Their mental impressions might be so deeply rooted that they don't seem like memories any longer but instead are expressed as a gravitational constant that the ducks can't ignore: Here. Come here. Home.

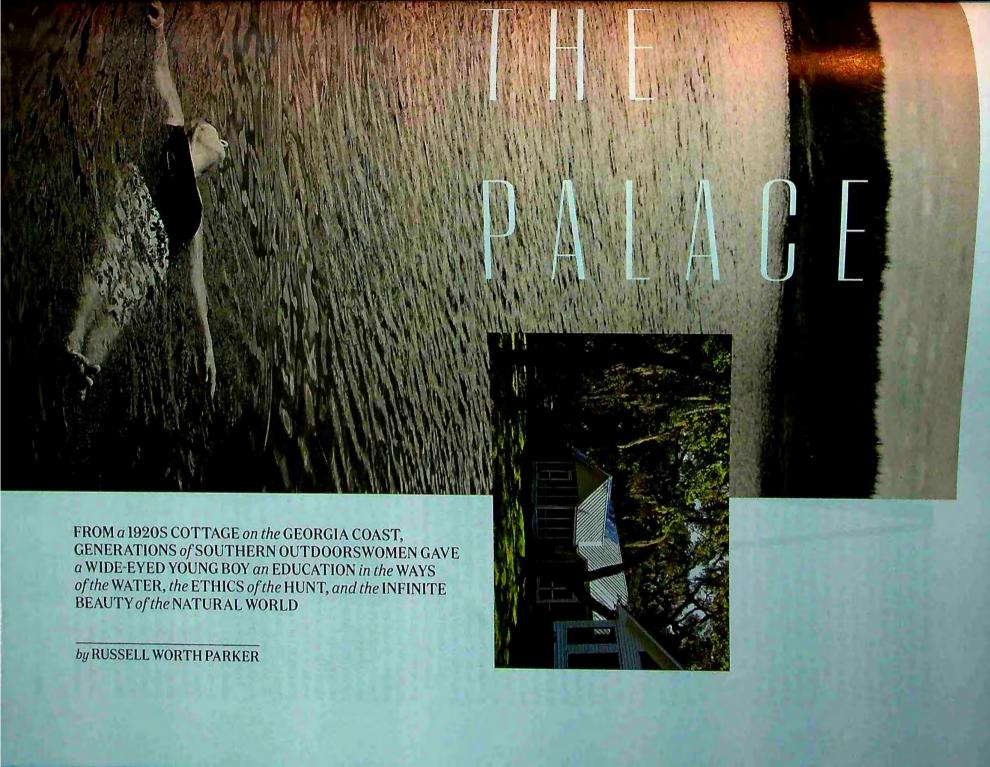
If that's the case, I know the feeling.













At Georgia's ragged edge stands a causeway made of earth piled by hand atop bricks and tires, long grown over with grass and sandspur and sea oxeye. It is a tenuous ribbon of stability cutting through mud and salt and spartina, connecting land and river in a place that is neither, perpetually a tidal shift away from becoming more of one or the other. Looking down its sandy length, I imagine all the footprints laid upon it slowly becoming manifest, one hundred years of emerging soles and toes. There are mine, of course-once tiny and tentative, then confident and bold, now hindered by age and injury. But far more of them belong to people who have meant the most to me, and who made the most of me. In this place, save for mine, they belong entirely to women who wore a path through the outdoors I've been trying to follow for fifty years.

Laura Powers Campbell was a waterwoman, living by moon phase and season as much as clock or calendar. She was my great-great-great-aunt by marriage, a connection that seems too remote for a woman whose cackling laugh! still hear decades after cancer silenced it. But family has always been a mutable concept in the South, where questions of provenance are easily lost amid love and dedication. I never thought of her as anything but permanent, as much a part of the ecology of the coast as gray-black mud and oyster shells, and I do not consider it naivete that I assumed I would always be able to run into her tanned and sun-spotted arms to be pronounced her "precious angel in this world." Ordinary mortality gave the lie to the main of my belief, but because she said it, I still consider myself her angel, despite my many failings in that regard. The truth is she similarly blessed members of multiple generations. They blessed others in turn. In that sense, she achieved the gentle immortality I always ascribed to her.

I never knew Laura's husband, a man forty years her senior with whom I share blood. Laura and James Campbell, called Skipper, lived and worked in Decatur, Georgia. But in the 1940s and '50s, tide and moon regularly pulled them southeast upon red dirt roads to a community still barely large enough to have its own name. Driven by the rhythms of the water, with Skipper limited by age, Laura rowed a wooden bateau into the vastness of Doboy Sound, where they could catch flounder and trout and channel bass, decades before fashion made them known as redfish. She was an artist with a cast net, hauling it in bulging with snapping shrimp, building the strength that would pull me so close years later. Thus did a Macon farm girl become a waterwoman.

In a simple house they called the Palace, Laura and Skipper lived with the weather rather than in spite of it. The four rooms, built of #2 yellow pine, stood tucked into the shadows of live oaks, sited there for the same breeze that still

ripples miles of marsh. In the cold months, more blankets sufficed for the failures of the single fireplace. For the Georgia heat, there were screens on the windows. They lived life as nature presented it. Over time, in that acceptance came mastery.

Ultimately, time is all we have. Parting with it to the benefit of another is our most precious gift. Laura gave that gift freely despite being so wracked with pain from rheumatoid arthritis and degenerative disk disease that by the time she moved to the coast for good in 1964, she had to crawl from her boat to pull herself up on a railing after an outing. Even as a child, I knew pain would lay her flat eventually, so arriving at the Palace meant a sprint from the car to her arms. As she swept closefellowarrivals, I snuck into the kitchen hoping to see a galvanized bucket with a towel spread over it, the sound of fiddler crabs scratching within telling me we would soon be hustling down the causeway from the house with our rods to the dock and boat.

Laura was cautious and fearless in equal measure. She taught by doing and expected me to learn the same way, whether she was biting into a raw chicken neck "to get the juices flowing" before tying it onto a crab line or getting a stingray off a hook or teaching me how to dock and secure a boat against a fast-moving tide. I was not yet ten years old the first time I found myself driving a boat wide open, her hand on my shoulder as she calmly explained how to quarter a shrimp boat's wake or avoid shifting sandbars. But Laura's wisdom was not limited to rod and net. In the decades before I knew her, before pain stole a piece of her life, she hunted squirrel in the woods, duck in the swamps, and marsh hen in the creeks. More grandly, days not commanded by life in Decatur or spent at the Palace found Laura and Skipper near Tallahassee, Florida, at a quail plantation called Foshalee, where my great-grandfather Louis "Bub" Campbell, Skipper's nephew, was the manager.

f Laura taught me how to be an outdoorsman, at Foshalee she met the woman who would teach me why. Bub's wife died young, leaving him to raise his daughters, Julia Francis and Betty Ann Campbell, who would become my grandmother "Nana," on thousands of acres.

Laura was nine years older than Betty Ann, and their connection became some perfect blend of friends and sisters. More unusual for the time, they were outdoorswomen in the richest meaning of the word. The things they learned together over decades, under towering Florida pines and on Georgia waters, still color how I enter nature, with an appreciation bordering on reverence and a hopefully soft step.

Bub did not ignore the finer aspects of education expected of Julia and Betty Annin the 1930s and '40s, but he lived a life squarely in the province of men-one of dogs and quail and turkeys and horses. With their mother gone, a Black woman, Carrie Weaver, mothered the two girls, raising them into a society she herself would never be allowed to join. I sometimes wonder how much of the forty-eight years of joy I experienced with Nana I owe to the woman who raised her. Whatever

the percentage, I know I can never fulfill the debt I owe Mrs. Weaver, or the many women like her. In that, I am hardly alone in the Deep South.

Originally hired as the kennel manager and trainer, Bub was a dogman who rose to manage all of Foshalee for its Northern owners, people with names like Whitney and Vanderbilt. Cited for his expertise numerous times by the famed naturalist Herbert L. Stoddard, he lived his passions and raised his girls to know them. But true outdoors women are rarely the product of one person's tutelage, and Foshalee was rich with teachers.

Mr. "Country" Hand was a renowned turkey caller, known for killing a turkey while shooting backward from a galloping horse. I cannot imagine a better name for a man of his time and place, and he gave Nana an uncommon education in the ways of the natural world. She loved to tell of the time when she was ten and Mr. Hand put her in a blind. He admonished her not to move and sat well behind her to call. Fifteen turkeys walked by her unchallenged, disappearing the way only turkeys can. Exasperated, Mr. Hand asked her, "Betty Ann, why in the world didn't you shoot one of those toms?" She answered, "You told me not to move!" But turkey hunting was simply a beloved distraction at Foshalee. Quail were the mainstay, and Nana was forever marked by the outsize passion engendered by the bobwhite.

Nana helped Bub entertain quail-hunting parties,

seeking coveys on horseback and from horse-drawn wagons, dogs coursing through wire grass to point and honor one another. She learned the patterns of the birds, and when it was time to burn the grass under the pines, she fished for breamand rode for the simple pleasure of being on a horse. In pictures from the time, with her seated in the saddle, shotgun in hand, the smile on her face is as beatific as those in photos seventy years later in which she holds my daughter, her first great-grandchild. Laura and Skipper were there too, for covey after covey bursting from lespedeza in numbers of which we now only dream.

When the hunt was over, Nana accompanied them eastward to the Palace, trading her Stevens .410 for salt air and a bent fishing rod. I keep that Stevens stored in a gun safe for my daughter, a wood-and-steel manifestation of the gifts given by women who went before her. She may hunt, or she may not. But I mean to honor that legacy, and her, as best I can by giving her the option to know the things treasured by the women who so influenced her father.

ge and life force changes, none more so than for women, too often expected to marshal their resources for the betterment of others. When Betty Ann Campbell married Robert Lee Russell Jr. in 1949, she took what Bub had left her and bought nearly six hundred acres of pine, oak, and pasture in Northeast Georgia. There she made a home, decorating it in colors meant to evoke the feathers of quail and pheasant. Nana traded hunting for rearing five children, granting each a deep appreciation of the landscape and their own place within it. They roamed the farm, fishing in the pond and hunting during the seasons as Nana sat on her breezeway counting shots, asking for the story behind each on their return. I was her only grandchild for the first twelve years of my life, and though I lived a lesser version of my mother and her siblings' experience, Nana was no less engaged in connecting me to the world's natural cycles. I pulled bass and bream from her pond as soon as I could hold a



rod, often with her shouting, "Hallelujah, dahlin'!" My introduction to hunting was less glorious.

I was nine years old the first time I killed a warmblooded creature. I was newly possessed of a BB gun, and my prey was a flock of cedar waxwings eating berries at the bottom of Nana's back pasture. Standing at the edge of a mass of bramble and privet, I levered the gun again and again, firing and missing the birds from a distance of no more than six feet. I finally wounded one irretrievably, but insufficiently to relieve it of its suffering. It was not hunting, simply killing, and I understood the difference too late. Panicked, I ran for Nana, struggling through thigh-deep grass as the bird's tiny beak opened and closed ever more slowly in my fist. I had never known a time in my short years when my actions elicited anything but her signature phrase, "That's wondaful, dahlin'!" Now she sadly asked why I would do such a thing, explaining that killing without purpose is nothing more than unconscionable waste. Forty years later, the shame of it still brings a sting to my cheeks, and I refuse to kill anything I will not eat.

Too often life is sad poetry. As her father had before her, Nana lost her life's love young. In the wake of my grandfather's death, she stopped riding, fearful of an accident leaving her five children without a parent. But if she gave up many of her early loves, she passed them to two generations who understand the simple joy of watching a hummingbird buzzing just outside of reach or a whitetail buck bounding through a field, consumed by the rut.

Laura had no children, but as she helped raise Nana, so she helped raise her children, on the farm and at the Palace. At the coast they, and later I, lived immersed in the landscape. If I learned the ethics of the hunt from Nana, I learned the thrill of driving a boat at full throttle, a deep vee of white wake behind me, from Laura. Better still was both of them in the boat, rods rattling in the wind. In the thirteen-foot skiff Nana bought for

the dock at Post Office Creek, where Laura taught me to drop purple-backed fiddler crabs on hooks along the creosote-soaked pilings, keeping our lines taut and gently lifting and settling our rod tips as we waited for the nearly imperceptible bite of sheepshead feeding on barnacles below.

Time has since rendered some of my experiences with Nana and Laura irreplicable, like the close encounters I had with bottlenose dolphins in those less aware days. But the love of nature I got from Laura means I am happy now to keep my distance, to tread ever more lightly, to leave less wake. The things we did not know aside, the ethics Nana and Laura taught me still hold. Laura loved the author Robert Ruark, himself raised in North Carolina's Cape Fear region, where I now live with my wife and daughter. "You might as well learn that a man who catches fish or shoots game has got to make it fit to eat before he sleeps," he wrote in The Old Man and the Boy. "Otherwise it's all a waste and a sin to take it if you can't use it." Fish was for eating, not packing a freezer. You neither exceeded the limit nor took fish that didn't meet regulations. You packed your own gear, carried your own gear, and on return, maintained your own gear. Only then could you turn your attention to other things.

With notelevision at the Palace, dusk was for Skip Caray calling the Atlanta Braves on the radio and Laura calling raccoons in from the marsh so I could feed them in my lap. Injured raccoons lived in her house, secreting silverware behind the couch that we later retrieved for our own dinners on the screened porch, no matter the season. Once darkness fell, Laura loved to take me swimming amid whorls of bioluminescence before reading to me. Havilah Babcock, the brilliant sporting essayist and University of South Carolina English professor, was a staple. Though Ruark's words again seem most apt: "Anybody who reads this book is bound to realize that I had a real fine time as a kid."



ana passed last year, and the farm soon after. But the Palace stands as it has since 1926, four rooms at the nation's southeastern edge anchoring me against modernity's currents. Waking to sunrise under layers of winter quilts on the screened sleeping porch, I still feel the promise of magic in the morning chill. When my feet hit the floor, worn smooth by a century of similar awakenings, I know the simple value of things that have always been there. When I shuffle to the end of the bed to put on yesterday's clothes, the oil stains on the floor from outboard motors stored clamped to the footboard remind me that the Palace has always been a gateway to the natural world, where Laura truly lived without shield or insulation, and the source of so many of the gifts she and Nana gave us.

Laura's rods rest where they always have, in a hollowin the living room built next to a similarly purpose-built gun cabinet. Crossing the room, I step through French doors to a breezeway, part of an addition built in 2000. Cold bites my bare feet as I cross concrete to ascend wooden steps into a great room, so a ring ceilings and #2 yellow pine evoking a chapel. I am moved to glory every time I enter. Looking across the causeway to the marsh framed by hanging Spanish moss, all of it burnished in gold and fire, I hear Laura's and Nana's voices calling mea "precious angel in this world," telling me, "That's wondaful, dahlin'!" Then another, clearer for its actual presence: "Morning, baby. What do you need?"

My aunt Judy, Julia Brevard Russell Dodd—Nana's daughter, my mother's sister, and Laura's great-great-niece—bought the Palace in 1989, the year before Laura passed. The two having spent enough of their lives together that Laura named a boat the Judy B, it was a transfer less of ownership than responsibility for a woman who considers herself the place's caretaker rather than owner. Judy carries on her own version of Nana's and Laura's outdoor traditions. "I love seeing three-year-old girls shucking oysters," she says. "Ilove seeing little boys and cast nets. Life at the Palace was a simpler time that is still here if you look for it."

Leading children into the marsh and immersing them in its story, cooking from Laura's wild-game cookbooks and with recipes written in Nana's hand. Judy perpetuates a time when children spent as many hours bathed in sunshine and salt spray as they now do the flickering light of their devices. On Judy's dock, my daughter caught her own first fish. In kayaks, Judy leads us to a sandbar to collect sharks' teeth, and in her skiff, to the rich history and biology of Sapelo Island, twenty minutes away. Always present is the legacy Laura and Nana set before her, one she accepted along with the deed to the Palace. It is a heavy obligation, creating another generation of outdoors people in a place so rich in memories, where even after fifty years I am compelled by splendor to stop and stare as my daughterskips down the causeway, adding her footprints to those laid so long ago. G

From far left: A 1933 field trial trophy and a megalodon tooth; the sleeping porch; sunrise on the dock; Betty Ann Campbell (left) and Laura.



PAWLEYS ISLAND | MURRELLS INLET | LITCHFIELD BEACH GARDEN CITY | GEORGETOWN | ANDREWS



LITTLE THINGS, BIG MOMENTS

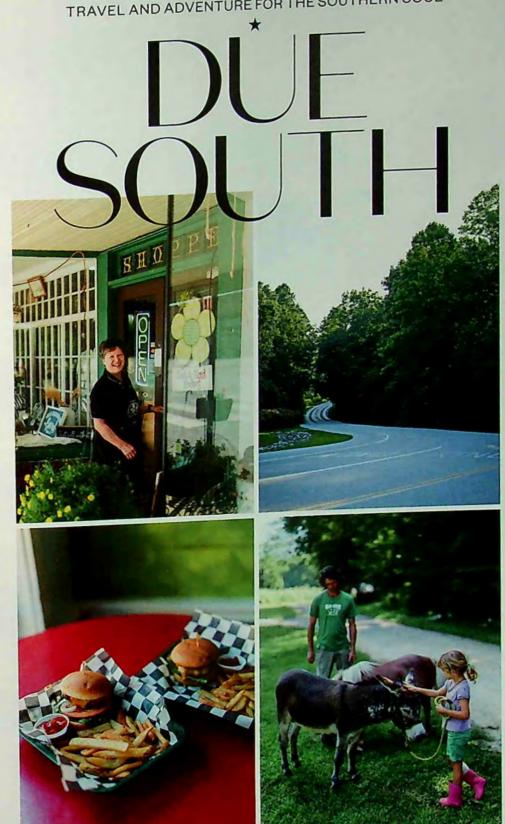




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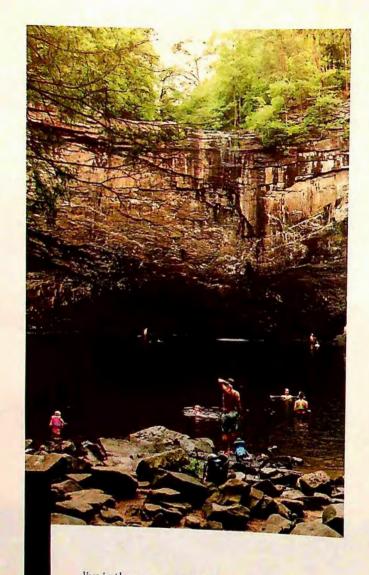


WEEKENDS

Tennessee Time Warp

A NOVELIST'S PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE WIND TOGETHER ALONG THE CUMBERLAND PLATEAU

By Kevin Wilson



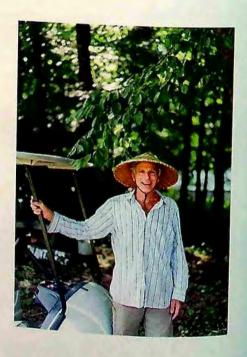
live in the same county in Tennessee where I grew up.
If you had told this to the teenage version of myself, he would have had a panic attack. In the nineties, living in Winchester, Tennessee, the county seat of Franklin County, I felt so isolated; everything that interested me (music, film, books, food, museums) always seemed out of reach. I imagined that if I cared about something, I'd have to search it out, and leave. So I did, and I stayed away for nearly ten years. But the longer I stayed away, the more I felt the pull of returning, as if each new experience were preparing metogohome. In 2005, two jobs opened up at the University of the South in Sewanee, back home in Franklin County, on the Cumberland Plateau. My wife, Leigh Anne, had gone to school at Sewanee. I'd grown up in the nearby valley. What in the world would it be like to return to the place I thought I'd left behind forever?

Almost every day, there's a moment when I feel the echoes of the past laid over the present. My sons, Griff and Patch, who are fourteen and ten, had the same gym teacher as I did, and when Coach Gilliam would greet me at their school, I was ready to drop and do

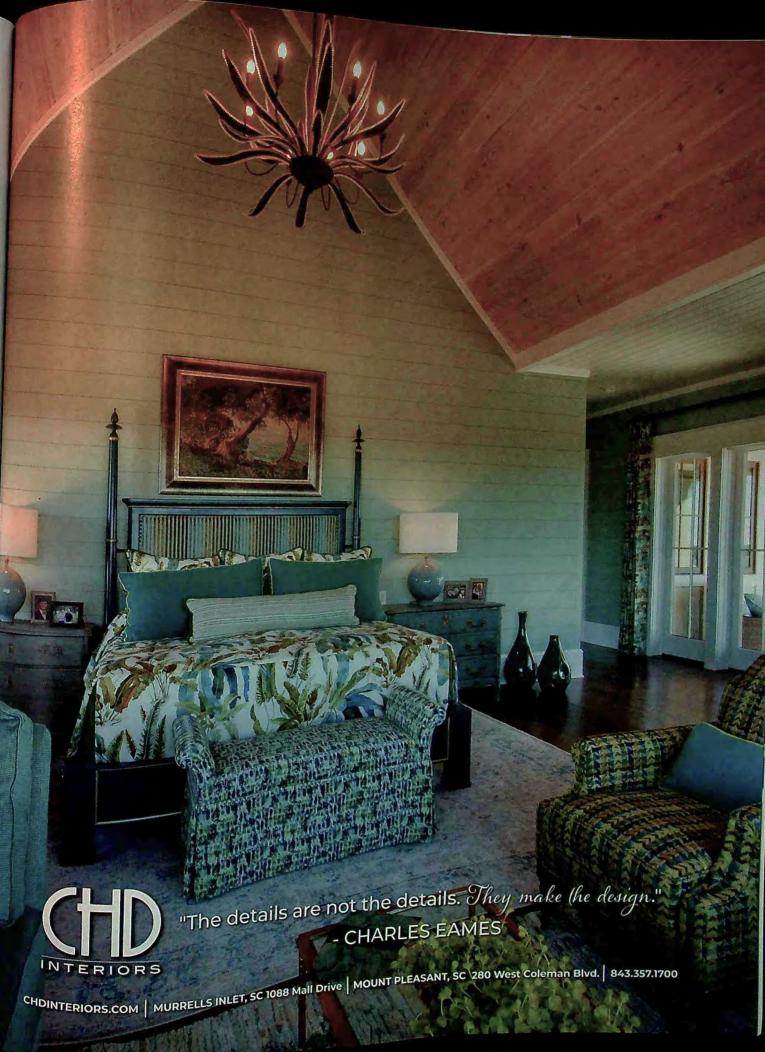
twenty push-ups if he asked me. When we see a movie at the Oldham Theatre in Winchester, I tell my kids how, at their age, I watched movies in these same seats, and they politely remind me that I have mentioned this every single time we go. Lately, I've been driving past local campaign signs featuring one of my best friends growing up, and he doesn't look much different from the teenager I remember.

We've made a life here. We're still living it. Now I cannot imagine leaving.

THE CUMBERLAND PLATEAU IS THE name of the southern section of the Appalachian Plateau that runs through Kentucky, Tennessee, and parts of northern Alabama and Georgia. Sewanee sits on this plateau, though people who live here always call it "the mountain." Our family loves to travel, to try new foods and explore museums, but most of our adventures occur within three counties in this area: Franklin, Marion, and Grundy. We'll set out for a day trip, the kind we often enjoy



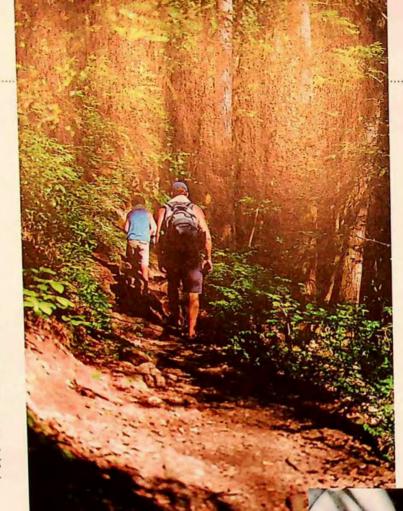
From left: Swimming at Foster Falls;
Bill Keener of Sequatchie Cove Farm. Previous
page, clockwise from top left: Cindy Day, the
owner of Dutch Maid Bakery in Tracy City;
a drive into Sewanee; Sequatchie's donkey Ace;
cheeseburgers and fries at the Blue Chair
Cafe & Tavern in Sewanee.

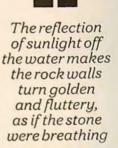


DUESOUTH

along our slice of the Cumberland. A recent summer weekend found us heading east on 1-24, winding our way down the mountain into Marion County for our first stop, Sequatchie Cove Farm.

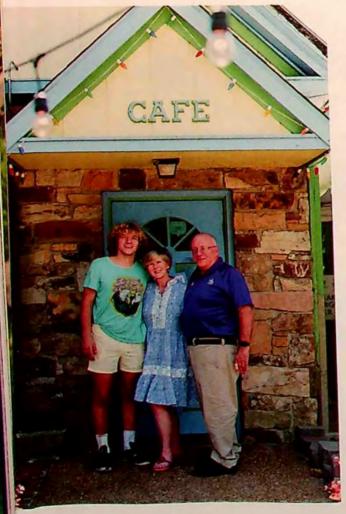
Bill and Miriam Keener, alongside their son and daughter-in-law, have run this three-hundred-acre farm for more than twenty years, producing organic vegetables, eggs, cheese, and beef that is some of the best I've ever eaten. Every Saturday morning, at the farm's trading post, people come from all over to pick up preordered items or to simply browse. Today we've ordered ground beef and Cumberland cheese, Sequatchie's take on the French Tomme de Savoie, a mild, earthy cheese perfect for burgers, as well as a blueberry buckle made by Hen of the Woods, a local catering company run by our neighbor in Sewanee, Mallory Grimm. When we arrive, there is already a small crowd, including the Keeners'son, Kelsey, who is letting chil-











dren pet the miniature horse and donkey, flanked by one of the huge Great Pyrenees dogs who roam the farm and often nap in the fields with the chickens. Miriam offers me a pickled carrot that is so incredible I ask if I can buy some, only to learn they've already sold out, so I make a mental note to get here earlier next time. Bill pulls up on his tractor, and we chat about my family's recent trip to Ireland. (We were in Dublin on Bloomsday, and I had been reading Bill's ruminations on Ulysses on his Substack newsletter.) Kind, enthusiastic, and charismatic, Bill is one of the most interesting people I've ever met, willing to talk to anyone about anything.

The farm offers a wide variety of workshops, from making brooms to fermenting miso to raising pastured pork. Griff has twice taken workshops with the famed California-based cook and author Sonoko Sakai, whom the late Jonathan Gold of the Los Angeles Times credited with making possibly the best soba noodles outside of Japan. For the second workshop, I lingered along the edges as Sakai taught everyone aboutokonomiyaki, a savory Japanese pancake. Griff stood next to Southern chefs including Caroline Thompson, a food superstar in Sewanee, and Sakai treated them all with the same respect. Afterward, we sat on the grass and ate the okonomiyaki Griff had just made. In these moments, thinking about the perceived lack of opportunity I had experienced, I watch as my son,



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From left: Gathering outdoors at the Blue Chair Cafe; a shady path along Fiery Gizzard Trail.

growing up in this same region, is working with nationally recognized chefs and cooking food that my own grandmother, born and raised in Kobe, Japan, would have savored. Griff returned home that day knowing new ways to become the person he wants to be.

After we say goodbye to the Keeners and the miniature horse, heavily pregnant with what will apparently be a mini mule, we head to our next stop, only twenty minutes away. We have to resist the urge to eat the blueberry buckle on the drive.

JUST NORTH ALONG US 41, WE ARRIVE at the Foster Falls Recreation Area. From this point, we can access the Fiery Gizzard Trail, a twelve-mile hike through some of the most scenic landscapes in Tennessee. When I was in college in Nashville, the first time I brought home friends from school, we did an overnight hike along the trail's waterfalls and rock formations, stopping to admire the stunning view from Raven Point, looking down at the Fiery Gizzard Creek gorge.

Leigh Anne, who grew up in Atlanta and attended Sewanee in the late eighties, had also hiked this trail with classmates, and when we moved back to the mountain, it was one of our first hikes together. But twelve miles in the heat with kids is not ideal, so instead, we change into bathing suits and make the much easier trek less than a mile down to Foster Falls, where we stand in the midst of a sixty-foot waterfall, rock walls surrounding us, and a deep swimming hole. The reflection of sunlight off the water makes the rock walls turn golden and fluttery, as if the stone were breathing.

Griff heads to an edge to look for crayfish where a creek feeds the swimming hole. Patch, Leigh Anne, and I cautiously walk into the water, which, even in summer, is bracing. We submerge and float on our backs to stare up at flecks of green foliage hiding in cracks of the rock. Griff finally joins us, and we swim to the waterfall, stand under it, and then sit ourselves on a little ledge, and it feels like we're on our sofa at home. Patch tells me the swimming hole reminds him of one we explored last spring in Belize, where we hiked into a gorge and swam in water so blue it felt unreal. I smile at the thought that the place where we live has something that can evoke that same sense of beauty. If Patchwants a spot in his hometown to impress the people who come into his life, he'll know exactly where to go.

Needing a snack, we drive ten minutes on 41 into Tracy City, a small town in

Grundy County and home to the oldest family-owned bakery in the state, Dutch Maid Bakery, which opened in 1902. In a brick building downtown, owner Cindy Day still makes bread and pastries using some of the equipment from the bakery's early days. It's hard to pick a favorite, but Griff and Leigh Anne are partial to the éclairs, while Patch and I go for the ginger cookies. Griff asks if this was a place I loved as a kid, and I tell him I'd never even heard of it until I moved back home. I suddenly realize that, once we had kids, Leigh Anne and I explored this area we thought we knew through different eyes; so many of our discoveries came because of them. Maybeit's easier to have epiphanies when you're eating a giant cookie.

WHEN WE GET BACK TO SEWANEE, WE grab an early drink at the Blue Chair Cafe & Tavern. Jimmy and Sarah Wilson, my uncle and aunt, run the place, and over the years it's become a gathering spot on the mountain. The week before, Patch and I came here for a viewing party to see my friend compete on Jeopardy! As fifty people packed into the building, drinking beers from Jackalope Brewing Company and eating the best burgers in Sewanee, we cheered for Lauryl Tucker, Patch highfiving her son for every correct answer.

Now we sit outside at a picnic table, drinking beers called Thunder Ann and Bearwalker, waiting for our beer-battered french fries while the kids play across the street at Angel Park. Two years earlier, we adopted Dolly, the feral cat who had lived behind the tavern for years, the sweetest cat we've ever known. We cannot imagine our life without her, and we're reminded again that the longer we live here, the more reasons we find to stay.

In late afternoon, we invite our friends and their two sons over to our house so the kids can take a swim in Hidden Hollow Lake. As afternoon turns to evening, we talk about the day's adventures, and we layer these memories over those of the past, when I was young, when Leigh Anne was a college student, when our children were so small it seemed like they would never grow up. Now I imagine Griff and Patch, once they get their driver's licenses, setting out on road trips through the plateau with their own friends, while we wait for them to tell us the stories of what they have discovered.

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OUR KIND OF PLACE

Writers' Roost

WE CAME FOR THE GROUPER SANDWICHES AND STAYED TO PLAY AT BIRD'S APHRODISIAC OYSTER SHACK

By CJ Hauser

he first night I spent in Tallahassee, the previous tenant of the house I was renting showed me how the office locked from the outside. She and her exused to take turns locking each other into work on their novels. The office smelled powerfully of cigarettes. Iloved it, and her, at once. After she gave me the keys, she asked me if I wanted to go to Bird's.

We met two of her friends there. They were also writers. I was new to town, but already everyone I knew was a writer. I had moved to Tally from Connecticut-by-way-of-Brooklyn, to teach and study for my PhD at Florida State. Bird's Aphrodisiac Oyster Shack, where I immediately became a regular, is not what a person might think of as a writerly bar—it's a dive near busy Tennessee Street, just down the way from the Greyhound station. There's a giant mossy oak you park underneath, but my arborist friends back north had told me to never park under a live oak. One of them had actually gone so far as to get bar-drunk weepy and say he might never see me again—not because I

was moving far away, but because the South prioritized beauty over arboreal upkeep and he was sure I would soon be squashed to death in my bungalow by a fallen branch. This is neither here nor there. The point is, by virtue of writers monopolizing Bird's—with its graffiti sticker bathroom, its kiss-of-death comedy open mic, its grind-house movie screenings, and, most of all, its perfect sandwiches—maybe it was a writerly bar.

The menu, a laminated front-and-back one-sheet, had limited options but seemingly infinite combinations of those options, and everyone I knew was convinced their combo was the best. Mine was the grouper sandwich, blackened, with cheddar, jalapeño, tomato, and table hot sauce and tartar sauce on the side. I usually got fries, but sometimes I got slaw instead. I regret nothing, except the fact that as I write this, I am living in the part of New York people sometimes call the North Country and no one will make me a grouper sandwich unless it's part of a Lenten fish fry.

The Bird's menu is a linguistic joy. A stipulation around the chicken sandwich says, "You need to understand these are sandwiches and not whole chickens," which is more narratively compelling than any novel. My favorite bit of Bird's poetry is one of the options for preparing sandwiches: "Fried (except for today)."

The menu, since I moved to Tally in 2013, has always said this. And every today has always been an exception. There has never been a grouper fried on my watch. But I love how the description implies that, while never once has it happened, a sandwich *could* be fried. Maybe, someday, it could. It implies that today, in some way, is exceptional, even if all you've done, for example, is stare at the draft of a novel that just won't bend to your will and then knocked off to Bird's.

One time, I got stung by a thousand fire ants while mowing my yard, and my ankle swelled into a cankle. I was full of steroids plus pitchers of beer, and this was enough to get me on the Bird's stage to sing Alanis Morissette in front of a road sign hanging on the wall that says: SPEED HUMP. One time, on his way to meet us after work, our friend Ben swung by the Dunkin' Donuts dumpster. He idled in the alley until the day's garbage bag of stale doughnuts was thrown away, and yoinked it. By the time he pulled up to Bird's, we were truly drunk, our last grouper sandwiches consumed hours earlier, the kitchen closed. And then there was Ben. He popped the trunk of his car and sliced open the bag and we had a doughnut feast.

We ate at Bird's, and drank at Bird's, but mostly Bird's was where we went to gather, to chain-smoke under the parking lot pergola, shouting over traffic and shooting the shit. We gossiped about the writing program. We cried about our drafts. And we had art fights. Which writers we thought were good or bad or overrated. It all seemed so vital back then, though if I'm honest, the thing that most defined all the writers we gossiped about was that they were successful, and we weren't. They were probably in New York, drinking

martinis at the Algonquin with famous editors and the ghost of Dorothy Parker, while we, well, we were at Bird's. Eating doughnuts from Ben's trunk.

When we ran out of gossip and art fights, we played games. In one, we turned our names into measurements of the things we were known for. A Kilby was a unit of righteous rage. A Hoover was a frequency of sighing. A Hauser (me) was either how much someone's facescrunched up when they smiled or a degree of mercy. Another game was more rudimentary: We took book titles with the word heart in them and replaced heart with dick. The Dick Is a Lonely Hunter. "The Tell-Tale Dick." In the Dick of the Dick of the Country.

The other day I watched Pretend It's a City, that docuseries in which in theory Martin Scorsese interviews his longtime friend Fran Lebowitz but in practice Lebowitz just talks about how she sees life while Scorsese wheezes with laughter in close range. At one point they're talking about places where they used to drink and smoke and complain. They're talking about the smoking ban, talking about old times. It sounds a lotlike gossip about after-hours artist hangs, a lot like memories of f**king around. But no! Lebowitz says. Those hangs were something. You know what artists sitting around smoking and drinking in bars is called, Marty? It's called the history of art!

The history of art!

The history of art was written by Dorothy Parker at the Algonquin, sure. It was written by Ernest Hemingway at Harry's Bar. It was written by Dylan Thomas at the White Horse Tavern. And it was written at Bird's Aphrodisiac Oyster Shack. Which is to say, it is written anywhere people who are trying to make things gather. Because after a day of sitting alone with your own mind on the page, it is such a gift to play, to be ridiculous and bawdy and stupid. To get drunk and sing Alanis even though the doctor told you not to. To lean too close to the cute girl in your workshop during the grind-house feature. To crush your lipstick-stained cigarettes into the same glass dish as someone else's as you fight about which Bonnie Raitt lyrics are the best.

Play is the history of art, Marty.

People always ask writers about their craft, about their desks. But that's not where it really happens. Ask them where they play. Where they cut loose. Where they go to stay sober. Where they listen to each other tenderly or go on long walks. Ask them where they go when they're afraid they might never be fried sandwich material, might never make anything extraordinary. Where they gather with beloveds in the hopes that the normal Fried (except for today) rules of the universe might be suspended, even if just for the night. G



People always ask writers about their craft, about their desks. But that's not where it really happens. Ask them where they play



Dollar bills, signs, and mementos line the walls at Bird's in Tallahassee.





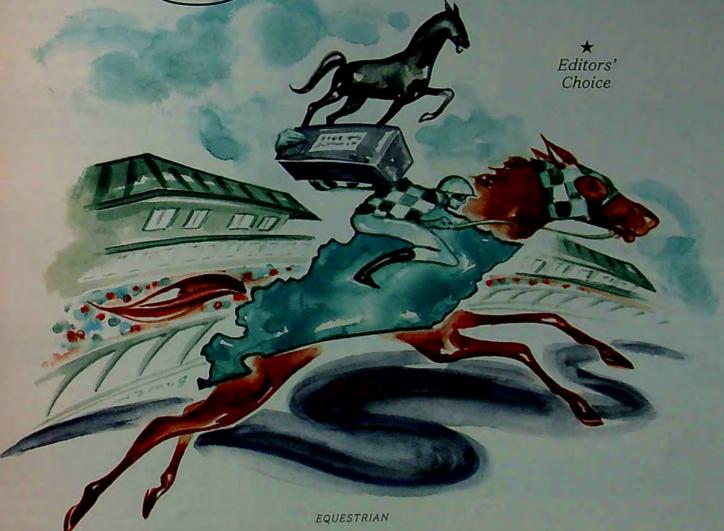
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Breeders' Cup Returns to the Bluegrass

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

In 1982, Lexington horseman John Gaines proposed a season-ending event to bring together the world's top Thoroughbreds for a day of championship racing. "Just like the NFL has its Super Bowl and Major League Baseball has the World Series, our founders believed that our sport needed a championship of its own," says Breeders' Cup CEO Drew Fleming. The first Breeders' Cup World Championships took place in 1984 at California's Hollywood Park, and nowadays the last race of the weekend—the Breeders' Cup





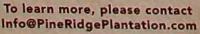
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SOUTHERN AGENDA

Classic-is considered a fourth leg of the Grand Slam of Thoroughbred racing after the Kentucky Derby, Preakness Stakes, and Belmont Stakes. Lexington didn't host its first Breeders' Cup until 2015, the year Triple Crown winner American Pharoah went wire to wire in the Classic and captured the elusive Grand Slam. The event again ran at Lexington's Keeneland Race Course in 2020 but without spectators due to the pandemic. The Breeders' Cup returns to Keeneland November 4 and 5, this time with fans in attendance and a concurrent festival highlighting Lexington's foundational role in the sport. "Central Kentucky is the home of Thoroughbred racing, and we want to showcase that to the world," Fleming says. "It's also a great excuse to dress up, pour a glass of Champagne, and enjoy a spectacular week of the equestrian lifestyle."

■ breederscup.com

FESTIVAL

Alabama

FRONT AND CENTER

During Porch Fest (November 19) in historic little Brewton, local and regional bands play from porches fronting thirty of the town's oldest, grandest, or most charming homes, many built in the mid-1800s for its founding timber barons. Country musicians croon among Corinthian columns, bluegrass pluckers perform behind slender turned balustrades, and rock rolls over Craftsman bungalows' brick steps. The event celebrates Brewton's musical heritage-the Oak Ridge Boys' William Lee Golden (who played last year) is a native son-as well as its well-preserved structures. The entire downtown is on the National Register of Historic Places, including Alabama's oldest bank, with a lacelike white-tile facade. "Most of the porches look straight out of a magazine, but I like that some smaller stoops are stages too," says the local musician Shannon Brantley. "It's a giant block party." The daylong concert series culminates at the striking, wedding cake-esque curved portico of the 1903 Downing House, where listeners catch the show from the comfort of their lawn chairs.

cityofbrewton.org

FOOD

Arkansas

LET THE CHIPS FALL

Legend has it that Arkansas's love affair with gooey, peppery melted cheese dip dates back to 1935, when Blackie Donnelly and his wife, Margie, concocted a spicy recipe for dippable cheese at their Mexico Chiquito restaurant, then in Hot Springs. Plenty of riffs followed over the years, as well as homages, including In Queso Fever: A Movie about Cheese Dip, a 2009 documentary by the Arkansas native Nick Rogers that spurred the creation of downtown Little Rock's annual World Cheese Dip Championship (October 30). In professional and amateur divisions, restaurateurs and home cooks whip up their closely guarded versions-most with a base of Velveeta and Ro-Tel, some heavy on the veggies, others flavored with beef, chicken, or bacon. Each ticket holder gets a bag of chips and a voting token. "Last year, I took three five-gallon buckets of cheese dip and I left with none," says Dominique Greer, the general manager of Dizzy's Gypsy Bistro, the Little Rock spot that claimed the top prize last year (and a few years before that, too). "I won't give away any secrets, but ours utilizes a grill, has a lot of different peppers in it, and is the perfect consistency to coat a chip."

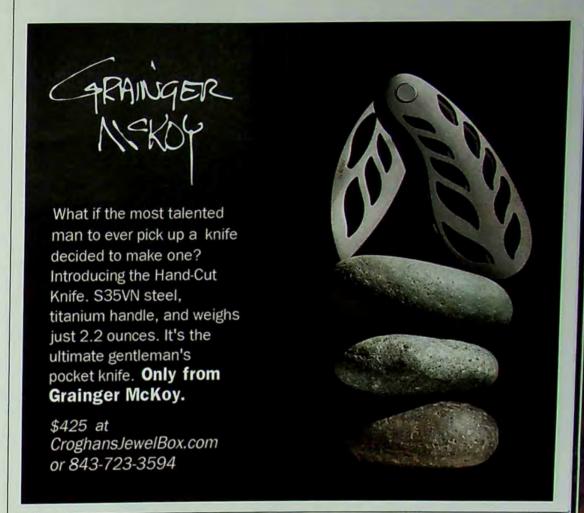
cheesedip.net

FISHING

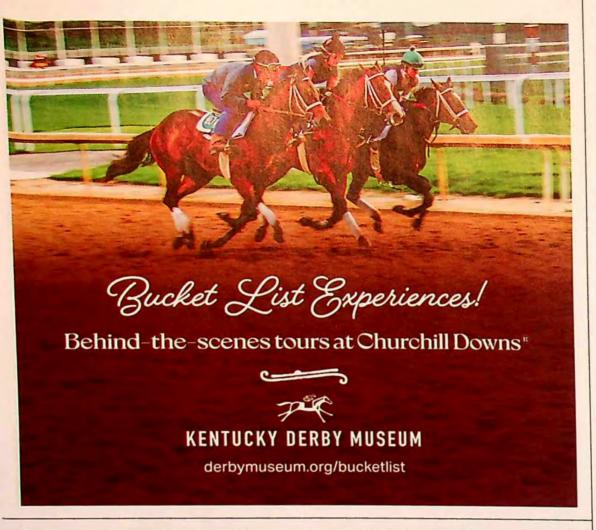
Florida

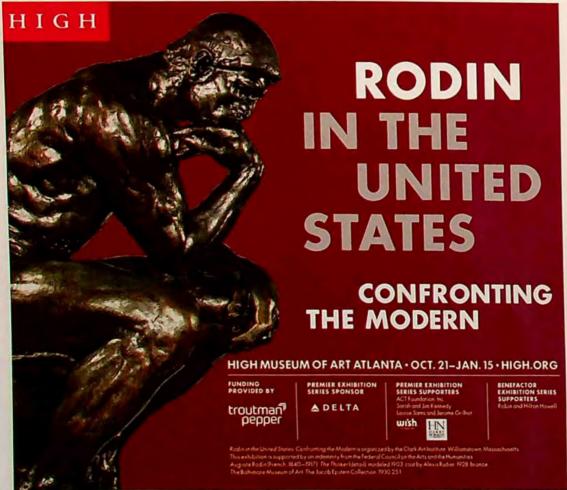
WORLD'S FAIR OF FLATS

Whether you want to learn how to tighten your fly-line loops when casting to cruising bonefish, tarpon, or permit, or dive deep into the cutting-edge science of saltwater flats conservation (or better yet, both!), set a course for the PGA National Resort in Palm Beach Gardens for November 4 and 5. The Florida-based Bonefish & Tarpon Trust will hold its seventh International Science Symposium & Flats Expo, a hip mash-up of research and recreation with presentations on the latest studies of flats species and habitats, clinics on fly tying and casting, an art and film festival, and









SOUTHERN AGENDA

an exposition packed with the latest gear. "This event only rolls around once every three years, and there's nothing else like it," says Jim McDuffie, the Trust's CEO. "We gather an amazing roster of living angling legends, the best boat and gear makers on the planet, and the scientists who are leading the charge on the conservation of saltwater flats and mangroves the world over." This year BTT will induct into its Circle of Honor some of the most recognized names in saltwater fly fishing and conservation: Chico Fernandez, Sandy Moret, Matt Connolly, and Andy Danylchuk.

bonefishtarpontrust.org

ART

Georgia

UNBRIDLED HISTORY

Last year, when Donovan Johnson, the executive director of the Bill Lowe Gallery in Atlanta, visited the studio of Georgia artist Todd Murphy, who had died in 2020, to discuss hosting a retrospective on the visionary's career, one work stopped him in his tracks: a digital painting of the National Museum of Racing's Hall of Fame jockey Jimmy Winkfield and his horse, Murphy's nod to the heroic achievements of Black jockeys. That painting and more than thirty other never-before-seen sculptures, found objects, and digital paintings became Wink, an exhibition examining the history and legacy of Black jockeys in America, opening at the gallery on October 7. Along one wall, a peplum dress billows over a film projection of a race, reminiscent of the 2.11-second-long 1878 film of a Black jockey riding a galloping steed, widely considered the first film ever made. "Todd had the ability to synthesize the zeitgeist in a unique way," Johnson says. "It's redemptive and beautiful."

■ lowegallery.com

FOOD

Louisiana

ROLLING IN DOUGH

It's not easy to make eight hundred pies in one day, but Nancy Brewer can do it. The



owner of the Kitchen Shop bakery in the small St. Landry Parish town of Grand Coteau, Brewer knows a thing or two about pie baking. And she knows more about sweet dough pie baking than pretty much anyone on earth. The regional Cajun treat is folded like a hand pie but has a thicker, softer, and sweeter crust than ordinary pies; popular fillings include custard, fig, lemon, blackberry, and Louisiana sweet potatoes. Grand Coteau calls itself the Sweet Dough Pie Capital of the World, and every fall, the town fittingly throws a Sweet Dough Pie Festival; this year (October 29), just like last year, Brewer will serve the special treats from her bakery. "People from across the state don't even know about sweet-dough pies," Brewer says. "But the festival sure is super popular."

cajuntravel.com

OUTDOORS

Maryland

THE ULTIMATE RAIL TRAIL

Autumn excursions on the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad not only showcase Appalachian fall color, but they also set up adventure seekers for a breezy downhill ride. The Cumberland-to-Frostburg rail line can haul a dozen bicycles on its roughly fifteen-mile run up and along Piney Mountain. At the top of the route in Frostburg, cyclists join a section of the Great Allegheny Passage, a rail trail paralleling the railroad back to Cumberland. The path is almost entirely coastable, with shaded downhill slopes, easy pedaling through









SOUTHERN AGENDA

tunnels, and striking Allegheny mountainviews from across a century-old truss bridge. (Heading in the other direction, the trail leads all the way to Pittsburgh.) A newly restored steam locomotive, No. 1309, might just be chugging down the mountain, too. Mothballed in 1956, the train reentered service last year, and like allengines, the massive marvel has its own personality. "Engines are constantly telling you what they like or don't like," says Wesley Heinz, the railroad's executive director. "They have a heartbeat. They speak to you. They sigh."

wmsr.com



OUTDOORS

Mississippi

SANDBAR SEASON

The Mississippi River is an impressive sight year-round, but hospitable weather and the usually lower water levels make fall the perfect season for discovering the secret life of the sandbar. Some barren, some sylvan, some miles in length, the Mississippi's no-name islets might be here one year, gone the next. "We're basically island-hopping," says professional riverman Matthew Burdine of his canoe expeditions, which guide explorers-from solo campers to bluegrass bands to supper clubs-to these ephemeral shores. The mission: Soaking up all the secluded natural wonder, sunbathing, and fossil hunting they afford. Barge traffic, fierce currents, and debris, among other hazards, can spell danger for inexperienced boaters, but John Ruskey at Quapaw Canoe Company out of Clarksdale and his partner Burdine at their new Mississippi River Expeditions out of Memphis run expert-led trips all year long. Even first-time paddlers will hit their stride in custom-made, hard-to-flip, thirty-foot-long craft fit for transporting small groups—along with every possible party supply.

- canoememphis.com
- island63.com

ANNIVERSARY

North Carolina

FARM GIRL TO FEMME FATALE

When Ava Gardner moved to Hollywood in the 1940s, stardom was her wildest dream. "She came from very simple beginnings and became one of the most famous people in the world," says Lynell Seabold, the executive director of the Ava Gardner Museum in downtown Smithfield. Born into a family of seven children in a farmhouse in rural Johnston County, Gardner eventually rose to international fame for her leading roles in blockbusters such as The Killers, The Night of the Iguana, and The Barefoot Contessa. She also married three of the most iconic celebrities of the day: Mickey Rooney, Artie Shaw, and Frank Sinatra. The museum's highlights include her costumes-the yellow corseted frock from My Forbidden Past, for instance, and the one-shouldered black Vera West gown from The Killers. This year's Ava Gardner Festival (October 7-9) at the museum celebrates the hundredth anniversary of her birth with film showings, the dedication of a mural and rose garden, and a musical tribute with songs from Gardner's personalrecord collection.

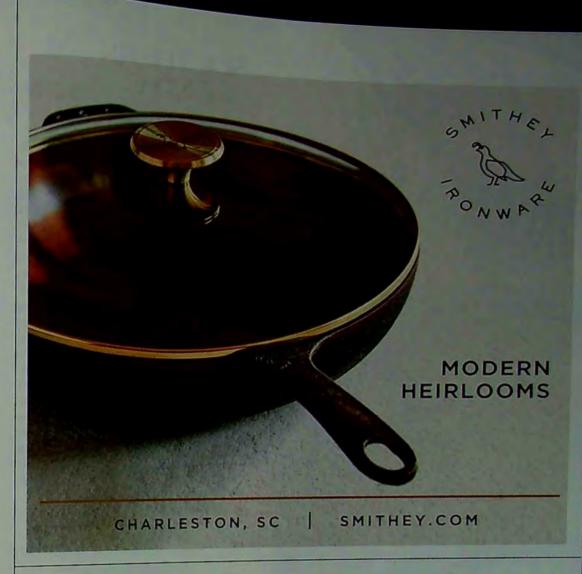
■ johnstoncountync.org/ava-gardner

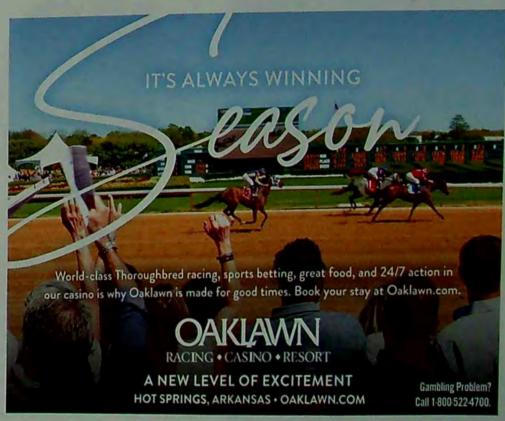
FESTIVAL

South Carolina

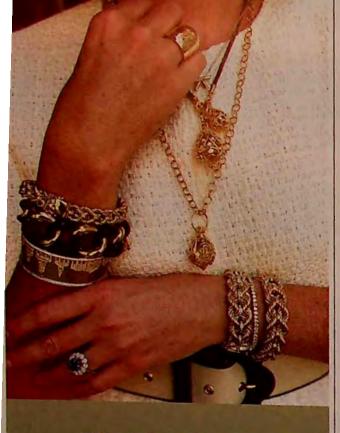
LOWCOUNTRY LEGACIES

In 1981, when the Penn Center's Heritage Days began on St. Helena Island, the event consisted of a one-day celebration of Gul-





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SOUTHERN AGENDA

lah Geechee history and culture. People loved it so much, recalls St. Helena native and cochair of the planning committee Marie Gibbs, organizers had to make it three times longer. This November 10-12, festivities will sprawl across the center's fifty-acre campus-site of the South's first school for people freed from slavery. "Our history is a legacy we're preserving and protecting," Gibbs says of the Gullah Geechee community. "Here we bring it back out and let you actually see what happened during that time, with music, storytelling, singing, dancing..." That list goes on: fish fry, Lowcountry supper, basketmaking, art, theater, a Saturday morning parade, and a worship service with old-time spirituals and call-and-response prayer Thursday night at the Brick Baptist Church. Don't miss the chance to imagine that space in 1862, when the Penn School's inaugural class of eighty pupils congregated for the first time.

penncenter.com/heritage-days



MUSIC

Tennessee

CAVE DWELLERS

"Going into a cave is timeless, and listening to music there is a surreal experience," says Todd Mayo, the founder and operator of the Caverns, a subterranean live-music venue in Pelham, about an hour northwest of Chattanooga. Mayo broadcasts PBS's Emmy-winning Bluegrass Underground from the Caverns, and the spot even won G&G's Favorite Southern Music Venue Bracket earlier this year. On October 8 and 9, the Caverns will host its inaugural CaveFest, with shows both underground

and in the recently added surface-level amphitheater. "For this first Cave Fest, we are going back to our bluegrass roots," Mayo says; headliners include Sam Bush, the Infamous Stringdusters, Leftover Salmon, Rising Appalachia, Yonder Mountain String Band, and surprise collaborations with the festival's artist in residence, Lindsay Lou. "We will have some late jams in the cave going deep into the night," Mayo promises. "And look out for Travis Stinson of the Volunteer String Band—he has one of the most amazing voices in bluegrass."

thecaverns.com

ART

Texas

OUTSIDE THE BOX

From the 1950s through 1979, a Houston postal worker named Jeff McKissack collected scraps of metal, bricks, gears, mannequins, statues, and rogue tractor parts and then used them to erect a mazelike three-thousand-square-foot monument dedicated to his favorite fruit. "The Orange Show Monument is a performance venue inside a massive whirligig wonder wheel," says Tommy Ralph Pace, the executive director of the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art (OSCVA), the foundation that protects and promotes this site and other outsiderartworks in Houston. Through exhibits, performances, classes, public art installations, and an annual springtime parade of decorated cars, "we're poking at the notion of who is an artist," Pace says. This fall, OSCVA caps off its fortieth year with a workshop, exhibit, and performance by the Alabama found-object artist Lonnie Holley, and a show by the Mississippi Hill Country Blues players R. L. Boyce and Lightnin' Malcolm.

orangeshow.org

ARCHITECTURE

Virginia

LOVESHRINE

These days, lovestruck couples rely on sports arena jumbotrons or skywriters to publicly spell out their affection in pixels or

puffs of airplane exhaust. But at the turn of the twentieth century, James H. Dooley, a Virginia businessman and the owner of Maymont, Richmond's Gilded Age estate turned park, chose to honor his wife, Sarah "Sallie" May, with the construction of what isstill the largest Tiffany glass window in a private home in America. When the couple built their summer abode, Swannanoa, a Blue Ridge Mountain Italianate marble manor, he ordered a four-thousand-piece, twelve-by-twelve-foot testament to their love, with her image glowing at its center. "I always tell grooms having weddings here, 'Mr. Dooley built all this for his wife; you're going to have to step it up!" says Adrianne Boyer, a director at the private property, which is also decked out with oak parquet flooring, coffered ceilings, and cherubic frescoes. Swannanoa sat abandoned and exposed to the elements during the Great Depression, but it's still remarkably intact, with scheduled dates for public visits running through late fall.

skyline-swannanoa-inc.square.site

Washington, D.C.

FOLK HEROES

"The artists in We Are Made of Stories: Self-Taught Artists in the Robson Family Collection followed their own stars and shaped artistic practices that suited their needs in a particular time and place," says Leslie Umberger, a curator at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, which recently opened the powerful exhibition of self-taught artists' work (it runs through March 26, 2023). "Some used art as a means of bearing witness, others for asserting presence and identity," she says. "Some used art as a language that transcended the verbal." The exhibition traces the rise of forty-three artists in the twentieth century-close to half of them from the South, including Alabama's Bill Traylor, who drew graphic silhouettes on paperboard, and South Carolina's Sam Doyle, who painted scenes of St. Helena Island life on tin siding. While most of the artists have been recognized in museums, several remain largely unknown, their art



That's My Jam

How Biscuit Love biscuits meet their delicious match

Karl and Sarah Worley opened their first Biscuit Love as a food truck in Nashville in 2012, and as a sweet success story, the business has grown to three locations in Tennessee. The couple will open their first out-of-state spot this fall in Birmingham and serve their buttery biscuits topped with hot chicken, sausage gravy, peanut butter frosting or a homemade jam. "A lot of people overdo jams with a one-to-one or one-to-two fruit-to-sugar ratio, but I think it tastes better when it's not overly sweet," Karl says. "And all our jams use the same recipe, so you can just flip out the fruits depending on what's in season."

BISCUIT LOVE JAM

Yield: I quart

INGREDIENTS

3 lb. peaches, or whatever fruit is in season, pitted and sliced 1/2 lb. granulated sugar I tsp. pure vanilla extract Itsp. salt 2 tbsp. butter

PREPARATION

Combine fruit, sugar, vanilla extract, and salt in a large saucepan over medium heat. Cook until the mixture reaches 218°F on a candy thermometer, about 30 minutes. Remove from heat and oarefully add butter and stir until it's melted and fully incorporated. Allow jam to cool. -Caroline Sanders Clements

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americanart.si.edu

REOPENING

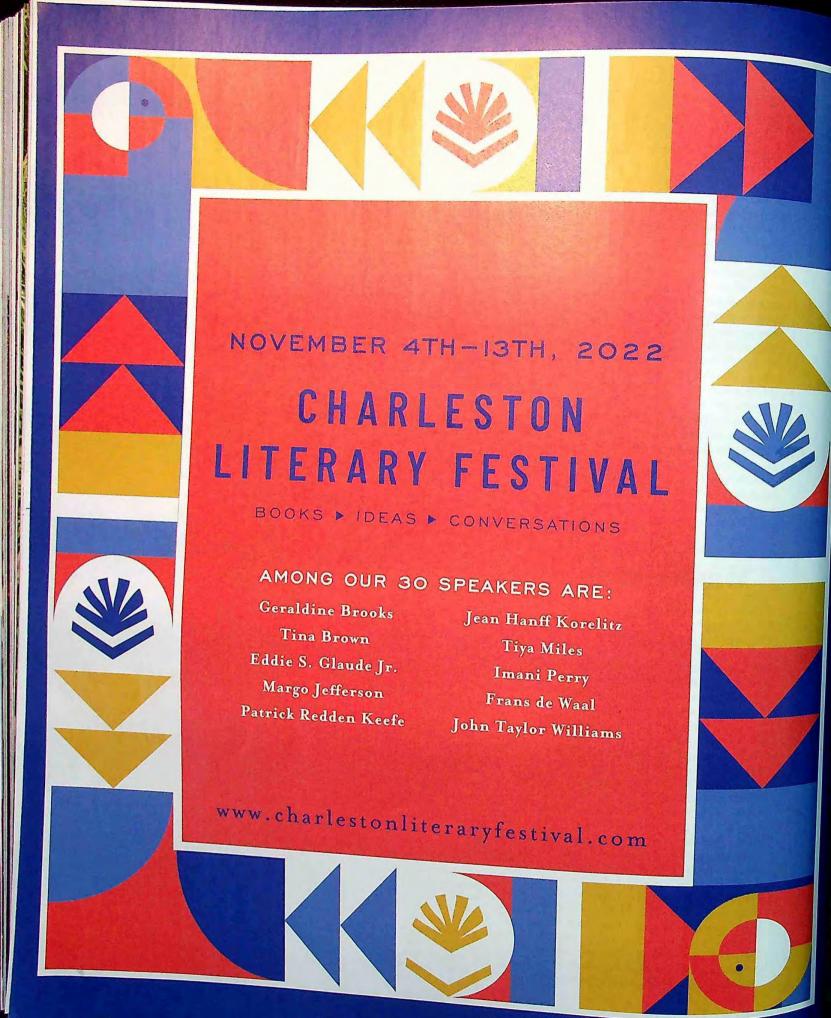
West Virginia

Last February, when a water pipe burst in the Oglebay Institute Glass Museum in Wheeling, flooding the display cases of chalices, vases, and the famous five-foottall, sixteen-gallon Sweeney punch bowl, curators looked at the situation as goblet half full. "We used it as an opportunity to do a thirty-year makeover," says Holly Mc-Cluskey, the institute's curator of glass, who, with her team, cleaned and inventoried all four thousand pieces of locally made glass on display. In the nineteenth century, Wheeling became a glassmaking powerhouse thanks to a fortuitous intersection of resources: sand from the Ohio River and a natural abundance of limestone; a bounty of cheap fuel sources including coal and natural gas; and an influx of travelers passing through on steamboats, railroads, and the first federally funded road. Fifty percent of all pressed glass used in the country at the time came from this area. On November7, the museum will reopen to the public with upgraded jet-black display cases and jewelry-storelighting to enhance the viewing experience, as well as a more thorough look at the hands behind the heirlooms. "We're focusing on the process, the product, and the people," McCluskey says. "For one piece of glass, there were as many as thirty workers involved in making it."

oionline.com

-Larry Bleiberg, Caroline Sanders Clements, Kinsey Gidick, Jennifer Kornegay, Lindsey Liles, Alexandra Marvar, T. Edward Nickens, Jonathan Shipley, Madeline Weinfield, and Tom Wilmes

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PEOPLE, PLACES, PARTIES

G&G Seafood Rodeo

Pensacola, Florida

In partnership with Visit Pensacola, G&G hosted an exclusive waterfront weekend featuring offshore fishing, creative Blade and Bow bourbon cocktails, and a collaborative sea-to-table dinner curated by star chefs and inspired by the bounty of Pensacola Bay-with a welcome reception presented alongside Grady-White Boats.

1. Grady-White boats are docked for guest exploration at the welcome cocktail reception. 2. The Orange Oasis by mixologist Katie Garrett. with Blade and Bow bourbon. 3. From left: Chels Ed Lordman, James Briscione, and Gregg McCarthy. 4. The second course: seared Florida tilefish with saffron braised leeks, C&D Mill cream corn polenta, and kale panade.





















East Fork Feast

New York City

In honor of Asheville's unique maker spirit, East Fork Pottery, Explore Asheville, and G&G hosted friends of the magazine for a special private dinner at Ginny's Supper Club in Harlem. Attendees enjoyed a collaborative menu by chef Ashleigh Shanti, music by Mad Mike featuring Big Blue, and wine, spirits, and beer from Asheville-based partners VIDL by Wicked Weed Brewing, Eda Rhyne Distilling Company, and Burial Beer.

5. From left: Luisa Yen, public relations director for Explore Asheville; Jael Skeffington, founder of French Broad Chocolates, chef Ashleigh Shanti of Good Hot Fish; and Marla Tambellini, vice president of marketing for Explore Asheville. 6. French 75s made with gin from Eda Rhyne Distilling Company. 7. From left: Paul Solis with Julie Vadnal, deputy editor of Domino, Alex Weiss Hills, senior developer for Pratt Institute, and wife Samantha Weiss Hills, deputy editor of commerce for Domino and Saveur magazines. 8. East Fork Pottery items adorn every table. 9. Connie Matisse, CEO and cofounder of East Fork Pottery. and daughter Vita Matisse. 10. A delectable side dish of sweet potatoes with ogiri and ramp chermoula.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2022

SIGNATURE EVENTS

Mark your calendar for these upcoming Garden & Gun experiences



Bourbon Heritage Month Dinner

September 29 New Orleans, Louisiana

Together with Louisville Tourism, Garden & Gun hosts a seated dinner in New Orleans in celebration of Bourbon Heritage Month. The evening features a curated menu accompanied by specialty bourbon cocktails and tastings to bring the flavors of Kentucky to the Big Easy.



10th Annual Shoot

November 5 Adairsville, Georgia

Join us for the tenth anniversary of the Annual Shoot, featuring a day in the field, a Southern lunch, Blade and Bow cocktails, and an awards ceremony. This year's event is hosted at Georgia's Barnsley Resort, a historic estate with a renowned shooting facility created in partnership with Beretta.



Spirit of Asheville

November 13-15 Asheville, North Carolina

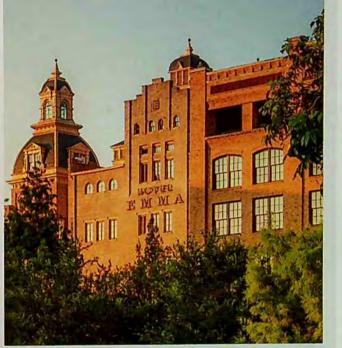
Join Garden & Gun for a multiday celebration of Asheville's creative spirit. Alongside G&G editors and staff, tour a variety of local galleries, studios, and artistic spaces, then experience the city's artful food and drink scene.



Sunday Suppers

Select Sundays through February 2023 Atlanta, Georgia

Celebrate the tradition of Sunday suppers with G&G at the Garden & Gun Club. Select Sundays, executive chef Sam Davis will collaborate with esteemed culinary talents on a three-course familystyle dinner, paired with wine. Guests are invited to relax and enjoy Sunday supper the way it was meant to be.



G&G Society Weekend

October 13-16 San Antonio, Texas

FOR MORE, FISIT GARDENANDGUN.COM/EVENTS

Mark your calendars for a much anticipated getaway among friends. This year, Society members are invited to join G&G in San Antonio. With live music, unforgettable meals, Blade and Bow cocktails, enviable sporting excursions, and accommodations at the chic Hotel Emma, located in the heart of the historic Pearl District, the weekend promises a true Hill Country experience.

Outings include a custom hat fitting at the renowned Paris Hatters and a private tour of the San Antonio Botanical Garden. Members will also have the chance to join G&G editor in chief David DiBenedetto, as well as contributing editors Latria Graham and Vivian Howard, in conversation.



Block Parties at the Stitzel-Weller Distillery

Select Fridays through March 2023 Louisville, Kentucky

Join Garden & Gun at the Stitzel-Weller Distillery to celebrate the launch of G&G's latest issues with our Bourbon Block Parties. Every other month, guests have the opportunity to view the newest edition of the magazine while enjoying live music, local food truck bites, artisan wares, and signature cocktails served from the iconic Blade and Bow horse trailer.

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BY ROY BLOUNT JR.

The Dirt Whisperer

BEHIND EVERY GOOD GARDENER IS A COMPOST HEAP

t's my wife who has the green thumb.
Also the green spirit. She walks into our garden of a morning and sings out, "Hello, everybody!" And the flowers, vegetables, shrubs, and volunteer ground covers (except for the goutweed, which is hateful and bent on achieving global domination) all straighten up and beam.

Whereas me, what I want from plants is produce. In Eden, even, I would have struggled to suppress my natural tendency to glare at tomato plants, for instance, and snap:

"Grow! You know! Tomatoes. Big red ones! That's your job!"

My job is compost. My job and my vocation. If only our tomato plants were as devoted to producing big red juicy tomatoes as I am to producing good rich loamy soil, we would have so many tomatoes we wouldn't know what to do.

That's how much compost we have, but that's all right, it's there, collectedly seething, simmering, getting further and further into itself: waiting. And those plants in the garden? Every damn one of them sprang up through—via—athick layer of my homemade dirt.

If I were more of a grandstander, I would stand out in the garden and crow:

"I am Chthon! Creator of earth! What

Mother Nature does, I do for a purpose! I agronomize decay!"

Chthon comes from the Greek word for soil. Some people will tell you to pronounce it thon, but what do they know about handmade humus? I get the whole thing in there, the Ch, the th, and the on. And I get just about everything break-downable into our loam.

There should be a term for composting giftedness. "Black thumb" suggests a clumsy carpenter. "Midas touch" is about yellow gold. Which is useless in the enrichment of protosoil.

I'll tell you something yellow that does lend a good deal to compost. A waste material drawn by excretory organs from circulatory fluids that is commonly, shamefully wasted indeed, even though it is so gratifyingly applicable, in the most direct way, to black gold.

It's okay if a cat does it too. I checked. (Not number two, though. Work it out with your cat as I have with Jimmy.)

You can learn things from compost. Strength of everyday materials, for instance. After fifty-some-odd years of running into peanut shells of indeterminate age, I would say, just as an estimate, that you could build a peanut-hull house that would last for quite a while.

You may be more of a social butterfly

than lam, but to me, this is something good about composting: You can—probably will—do it by yourself. Nobody pops up and says, "You missed a spot" to a composter.

Don't be *fussy* about your compost, friends. Gather ye rosebuds, gather ye cigar butts, gather ye grapefruit rinds (not suitable for compost? An old spouses' tale); bung 'em all in and let 'em at it.

They will decompose. What else are they going to do?

Not going to die. Not going to run rampant. What else about your property can you say that about?

Bounteous decay, it is, that draws upon the energies of ashes, blood, grounds, mowings, rakings, newspaper clippings (real news, physical news), shrimp shells (I know, you want to keep animals out; it can be done), animal fur. Name something that blends as many elements as a properly receptive compost heap.

The internet? Oh? There's an entry on the internet for squooshed invasive caterpillars? Plenty of room in a good compost heap for just that strange oozy element. A witch's brew, compost would be, if it weren't so ruddy wholesome. It is dirt, people, not something "soil-like," but soil itself. A source of rampant greenness and alsothink back, further back—pretty damn close to perhaps the primal play substance.

The World Wide Web, pfff. Have you searched there for compost humor? You'll find a few dusty attempts.

SORRY I'M LATE I WAS TURNING MY COMPOST.

I AM NOT A MUSHROOM SO DON'T KEEP ME IN THE DARK AND THROW COMPOST ATME.

STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPOST.

Eh. You know this, already, before I say it: There is only one compost drollery that endures. I don't know who came up with it. I do know that I have it on a T-shirt somewhere:

COMPOST HAPPENS.

But here's some philosophy I can offer, just a smidgen too long for a readable shirt: IF COMPOST IS WHERE IT SHOULD BE IN YOUR LIFE, WHEN SOMETHING GOES BAD YOU CAN FEEL GOOD ABOUT IT.

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